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JUNE 11 & 18, 2007

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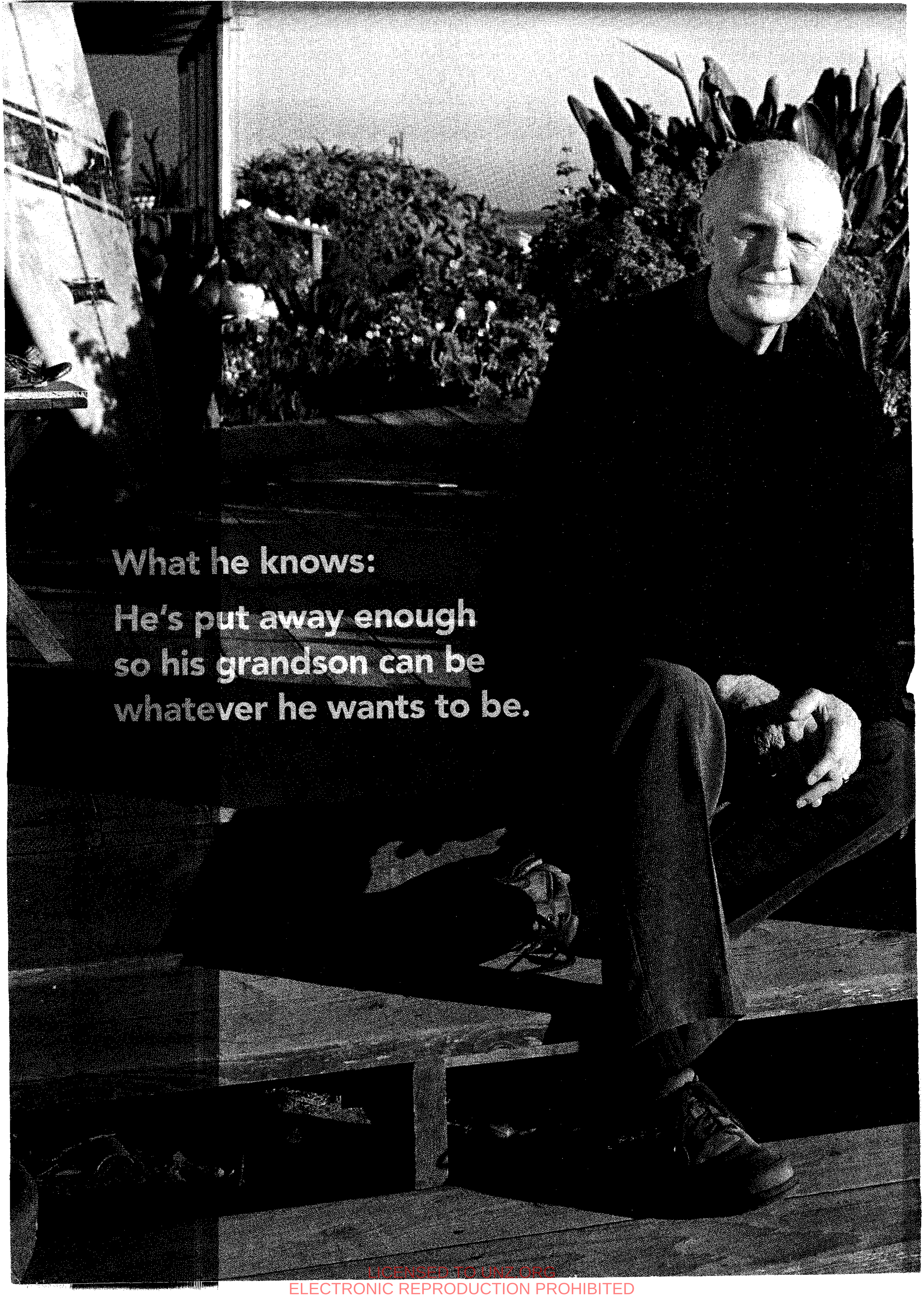
What he knows:
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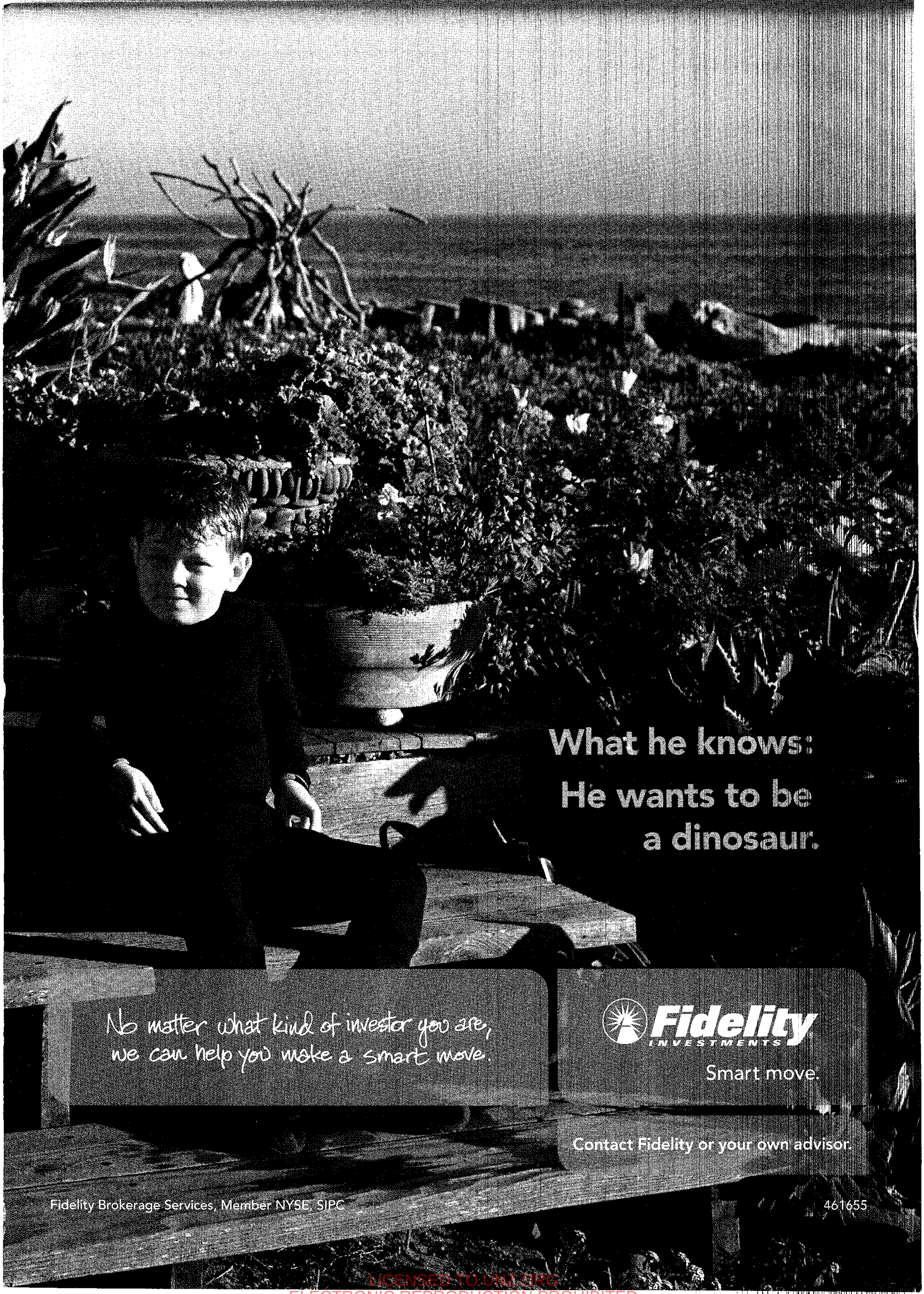
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SUMMER FICTION ISSUE

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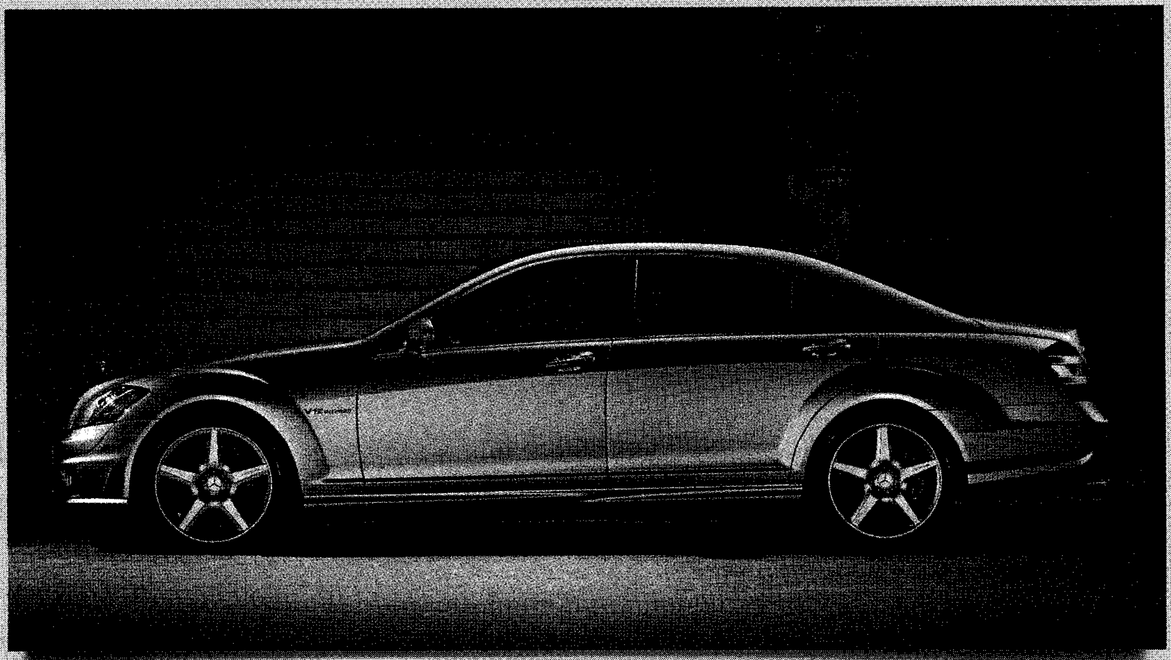
Morici concludes his review with a smile: “I’m a car guy. The more you know about cars, the more you want to drive this one.”



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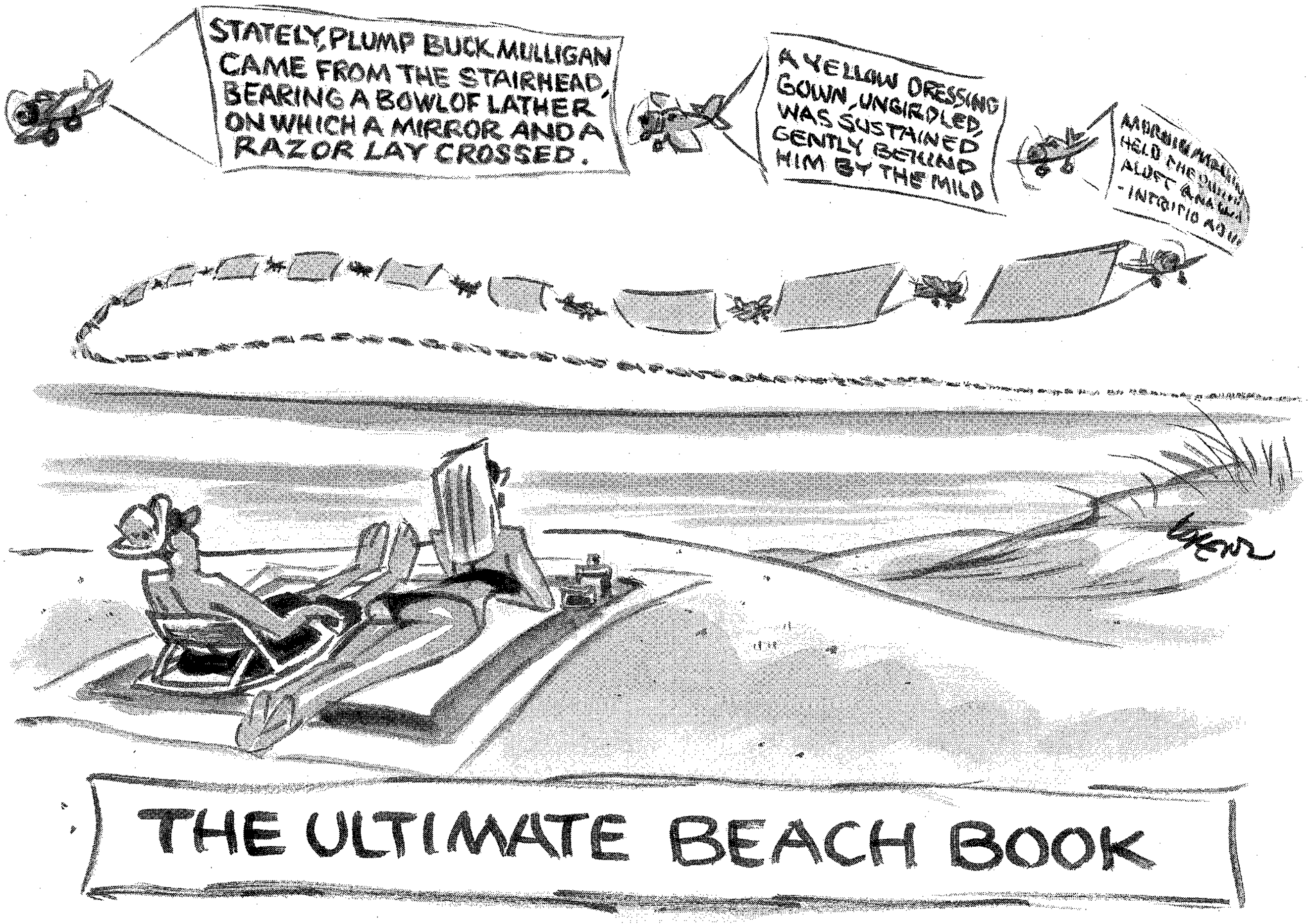
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A YELLOW DRESSING GOWN, UNGIRDLED, WAS SUSTAINED GENTLY BEHIND HIM BY THE MILD
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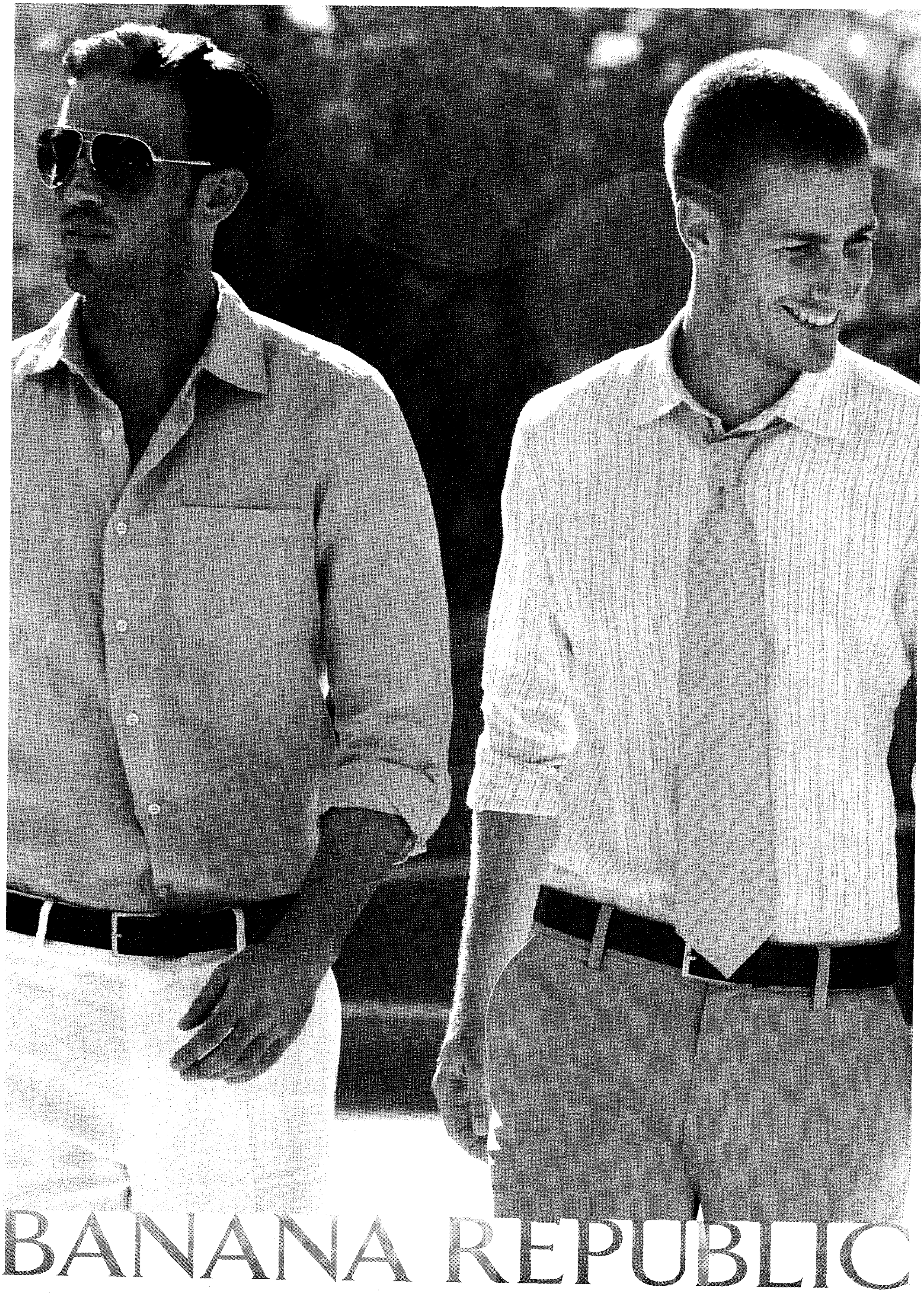
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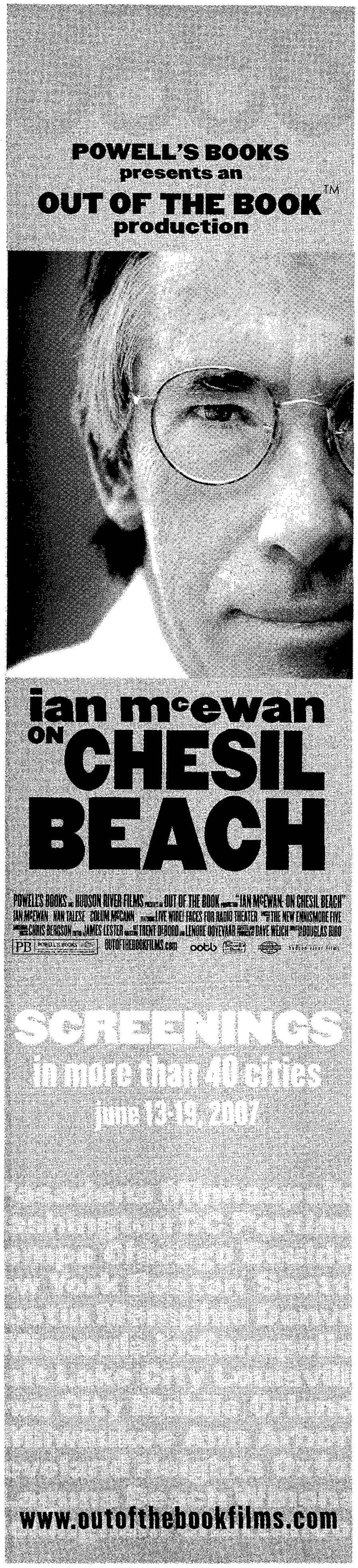
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CONTRIBUTORS

Junot Díaz ("Wildwood," p. 74) is the recipient of the American Academy of Arts and Letters Rome Fellowship in Literature. His first novel, "The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao," will be published in September.

D. T. Max ("Final Destination," p. 54) is the author of "The Family That Couldn't Sleep: A Medical Mystery."

Dave Eggers ("Commando," p. 72) is the editor of *McSweeney's*. His novel "What Is the What" came out in October.

Marisa Silver ("Old Enough," p. 88) has written a short-story collection, "Babe in Paradise," and a novel, "No Direction Home." Her next novel, "The God of War," will be published in 2008.

Miranda July ("Roy Spivey," p. 90; "Atlanta," p. 125) is the author of "No One Belongs Here More Than You," a short-story collection, which came out last month.

Gary Shteyngart ("Immortality," p. 94) has published two novels, "The Russian Debutante's Handbook" and "Absurdistan."

Roger Angell ("Ice Cream and Ashes," p. 104) is a fiction editor at the magazine and the author of, most recently, "Let Me Finish," a book of memoirs.

Edwidge Danticat ("Marie Micheline," p. 96) is the author of several works of fiction, including "The Dew Breaker." Her new book, "Brother, I'm Dying," a memoir, comes out in September.

Denis Johnson ("1966," p. 106) will publish his seventh novel, "Tree of Smoke," in the fall.

Jeffrey Eugenides ("Walkabout," p. 111) is the author of "The Virgin Suicides" and "Middlesex." He will be a guest writer at the Salzburg Festival this summer.

David Hoon Kim ("Sweetheart Sorrow," p. 116) spent his childhood in South Korea and studied in the U.S. and in France. This is his first published story.

Charles D'Ambrosio ("Summer of '42," p. 121) is the author of two short-story collections, including "The Dead Fish Museum," which came out last year.

Dan Chiasson (Books, p. 136) is a poet and literary critic. A collection of his essays, "One Kind of Everything: Poem and Person in Contemporary America," was published in March.

Adrian Tomine (Cover) is a writer and illustrator. "Shortcomings," his graphic novel, comes out in September.

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM
A.M. Homes and *Jeffrey Eugenides* reminisce about trips to the drive-in. / *Junot Díaz* reads a short story and *Edwidge Danticat* discusses it on the monthly fiction podcast. / *David Hoon Kim,* the author of the issue's début fiction, talks about writing in French and writing in English. / *Sasha Frere-Jones* listens to the music of Spoon. / A slide show of treasures from the literary archives at the University of Texas. / From the archives: *David Remnick* on Al Gore, *Elizabeth Kolbert* on Hillary Clinton, and more. / Animated cartoons, the caption contest, and a list of *New Yorker* events around the country.

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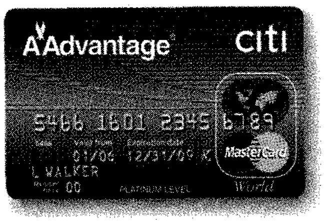

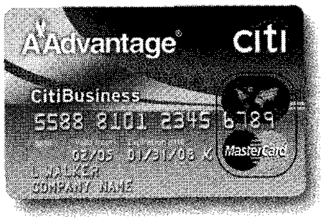

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RELIGIOUS PURPOSE

Anthony Gottlieb makes an informed critique of Christopher Hitchens's new book, "God Is Not Great," and provides the necessary context in which to evaluate the author's robust atheism (Books, May 21st). Hitchens's concept of God seems to come from the judgmental, all-powerful, vindictive figure of the ancient monotheistic religions as interpreted by ultraconservative literalists throughout history. Today's God, at least in most mainstream places of worship, is a God of compassion, inclusiveness, and social justice. Though both images may be flawed human constructs, the latter scarcely motivates the kinds of atrocities that Hitchens attributes to God-infused zealots. Increasing numbers of people seek to satisfy a desire for meaning and purpose—particularly the more sophisticated secularists in developed Western countries—by putting their faith in earthly goals, and humanity's ability to achieve them. Stopping global warming, "conquering" space, curing cancer, ending racism, educating all the world's children: many of us now pursue these objectives with what must be called religious fervor. And how else could we accurately characterize Hitchens's tirade against God?

E. William Henry
Memphis, Tenn.

Gottlieb criticizes Hitchens for attacking "some in the Catholic Church, especially Pope Pius XII, for their appeasement of Nazism, but [saying] little about the opposition to Nazism that came from religious communities and institutions." Hitchens, Gottlieb argues, has missed Jonathan Glover's point that "many protests against and acts of resistance to atrocity have . . . come from principled religious commitment." However, Hitchens repeatedly argues that similar courageous "acts of resistance to atrocity" have been performed by secular humanists, thus eliminating the argument that religion is *necessary* for courage and a principled moral stand. Moreover, such acts have usually been performed by individuals who, while framing their motivation in religious terms, have not received a-priori blessing, and rarely even a belated recognition, by religious authority, implying that religiosity is not *sufficient* for morality or courage. Hitchens, in this very logical way, responds to the common attack on atheists—and common justification of religion—that without religion there can be no morality.

Sinisa Mesarovic
Pullman, Wash.

TUNING UP

Burkhard Bilger, in his piece on the evolution of the guitar, gives an interesting overview of the archtop's birth and early development, of the painstaking process of its creation, and of Ken Parker's unique contributions to its further growth and development ("Struts and Frets," May 14th). Matt Umanov may see the current archtop market as being "flat as a fuckin' pancake," but today, as I have detailed in my book, "The Gibson Super 400—Art of the Fine Guitar," we are witnessing the flowering of a new golden era of guitar building, which encompasses all types of guitars—classical, flattop, electric, and archtop. And Parker is certainly not alone in his relentless pursuit of innovation and musical expression with the archtop. Mark Campellone, Robert Benedetto, and John Monteleone are all pushing the boundaries of the archtop into broader areas of musical application.

Thomas Van Hoose
Carrollton, Texas

I was excited to see Bilger's article, not only as a musician but also as a witness to Parker's first notion of his Fly guitar. In the early nineteen-eighties, Ken, Larry Fishman, and I stood at the bar at the now defunct 1369 Jazz Club, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Larry, an upright-acoustic-bass player, had begun to hand-wind pickups in his basement. His company, Fishman Trans-

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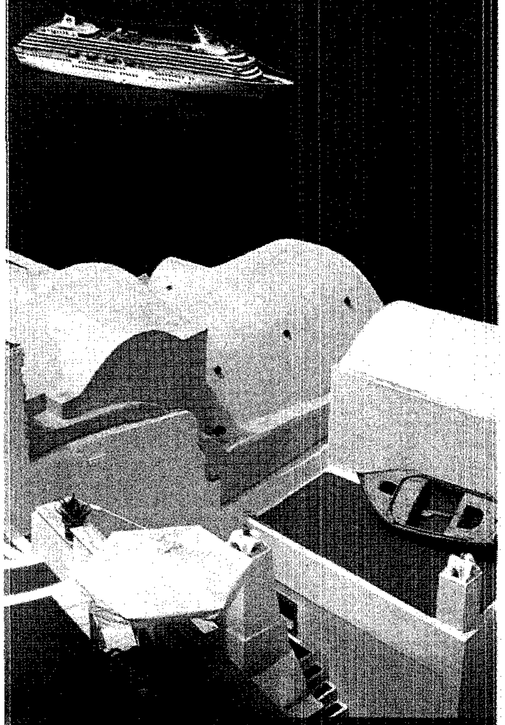

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ducers, went on to become one of the most innovative developers of pickups in the world. On that night, Ken sketched a picture of the Parker Fly guitar on a napkin, telling us, "I'm going to make it out of the stuff they use in the space shuttle." I watched with great interest to see if this guitar would make economic sense, and often used Ken's company in case studies in my classes. In a sense, the world wasn't ready for the brilliance of the Parker Fly, but this in no way diminishes the contributions and heady advancements made by Ken—contributions that he continues to make for the betterment of all guitar players, now and in the future. Together, Ken and Larry redefined the music manufacturing business and the way in which musicians communicate with their audience. I own an early Parker Fly, a truly beautiful guitar that is a joy to play and that sounds like no other guitar in the world—I only wish I had kept that napkin.

Kevin McCluskey
Professor of Music Entrepreneurship
Berklee College of Music
Boston, Mass.

ANCIENT INNOVATIONS

John Seabrook, in his entertaining account of the astonishing Antikythera device, was a little unfair to historians of ancient science, who have often commented on it in the past—at least, as far as the meagre evidence warranted at any one time ("Fragmentary Knowledge," May 14th). I was sorrier, though, to see Richard of Wallingford's clock at St. Albans described as "a fantastic astronomical device called the Albion ('All-by-One')." As I showed in my edition of Richard's writings thirty years ago, and again in my recent book "God's Clockmaker," the Albion was a complex computing device, a foot or so across. It was entirely different from the astronomical clock, with its six-foot dial. A laptop, as against a mainframe, so to speak.

John North
Oxford, England

Seabrook, discussing the Antikythera Mechanism, disparages the thesis that "science" did not exist before Copernicus and Galileo, ascribing this argument to a general prejudice against the ancient world. In making this criticism of the field, Seabrook and his sources persistently fail to distinguish between "technology" and "science." Historians of science such as Herbert Butterfield were very much aware of the technological achievements of the ancient world, as well as of the accumulation of knowledge in that period, upon which modern science later built. But they also believed it was important to show the dimensions of a scientific revolution that led to a mode of thought fundamentally different from that of ancient philosophers (and technical inventors). They may have been wrong; there may be no sharp distinction between science and technology. But they should not be criticized for academic prejudice without an understanding of what they were about.

Raymond D. Gastil
Deep River, Conn.

ART OR CRIME

Banksy, as profiled by Lauren Collins, is surely a talented artist, but the moment he makes a brushstroke on property that doesn't belong to him he is a vandal and a criminal ("Banksy Was Here," May 14th). It is an unfortunate truth that the notoriety given to Banksy and other graffiti vandals by media coverage like that in *The New Yorker* only encourages more vandals, and less talented ones, to contribute to urban blight. In Los Angeles alone, cleaning and fixing vandalism on buses, trains, and facilities costs L.A.'s Metro system twelve million dollars a year. The vandalism ranges from unintelligible words scrawled on seat backs and paper-label "slap tags" to etchings made with inscribing tools on windows and seats. Etching can't be cleaned; the windows must be replaced and the seats refinished at great expense to transit patrons and taxpayers. Banksy would do a lot more good in this world if he would confine his artistic endeavors to canvas.

William Heard
San Pedro, Calif.

•

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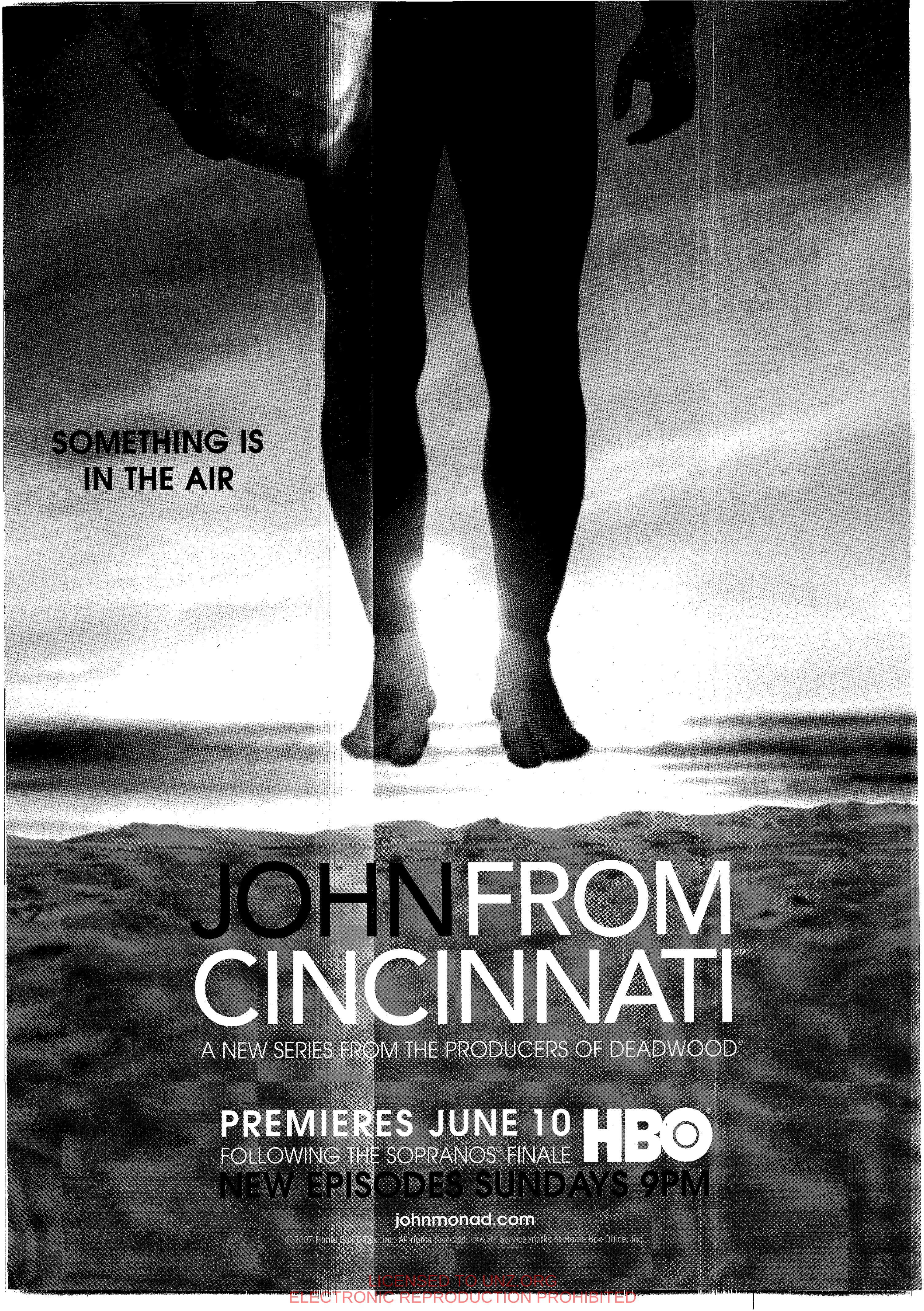
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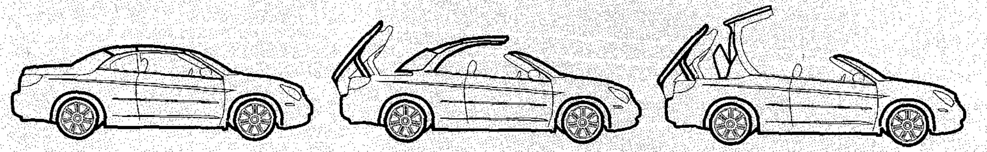

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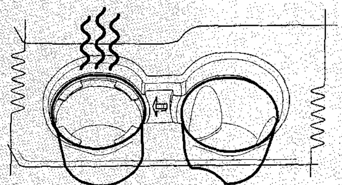

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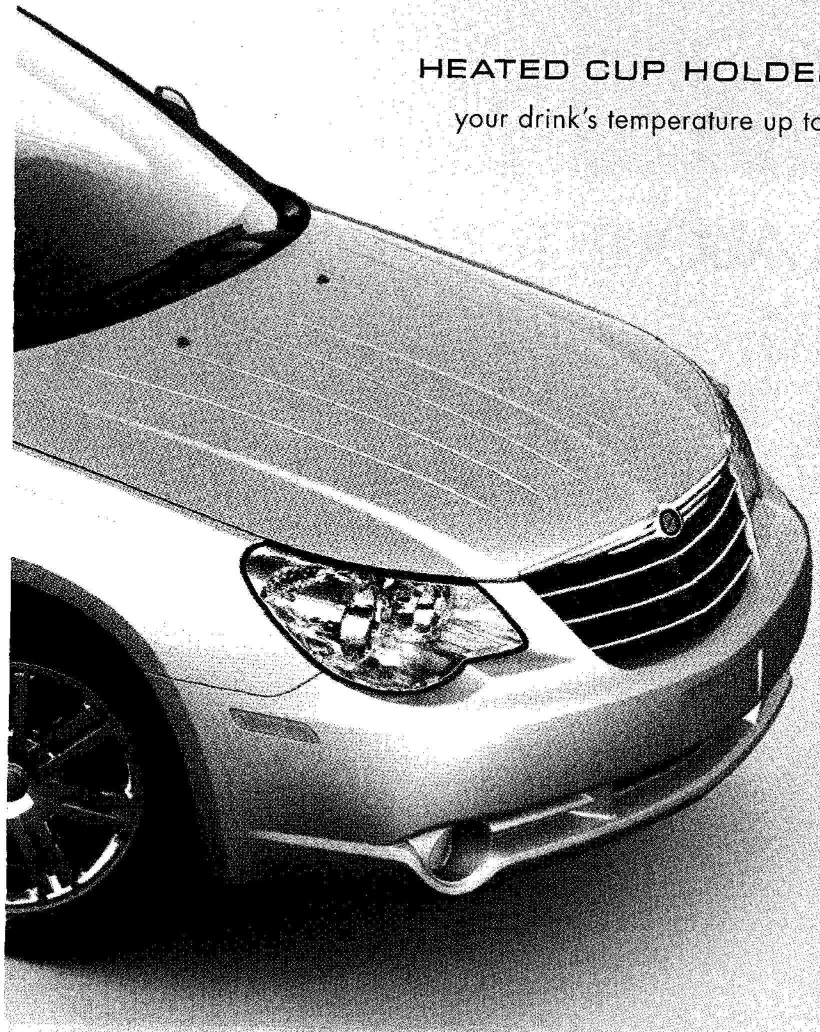

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"Celluloid Skyline," now at Grand Central Terminal. Photograph by Gus Powell.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19				

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
OVER THERE

Lawrence Wright, a writer for this magazine, brings his one-man play, "My Trip to Al-Qaeda," to Town Hall for two encore performances, following its recent run at Culture Project. The theatrical piece is a companion to Wright's book "The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11." (See page 16.)

NIGHT LIFE
L.A. LIGHT

The quirky Los Angeles torch singer Eleni Mandell, who has delivered a half-dozen albums that encompass a wide variety of styles—from sultry pop ballads to honky-tonk rambles—brings a selection of songs from her latest release, "Miracle of Five," to Joe's Pub. (See page 20.)

ART
BOOK SENSE

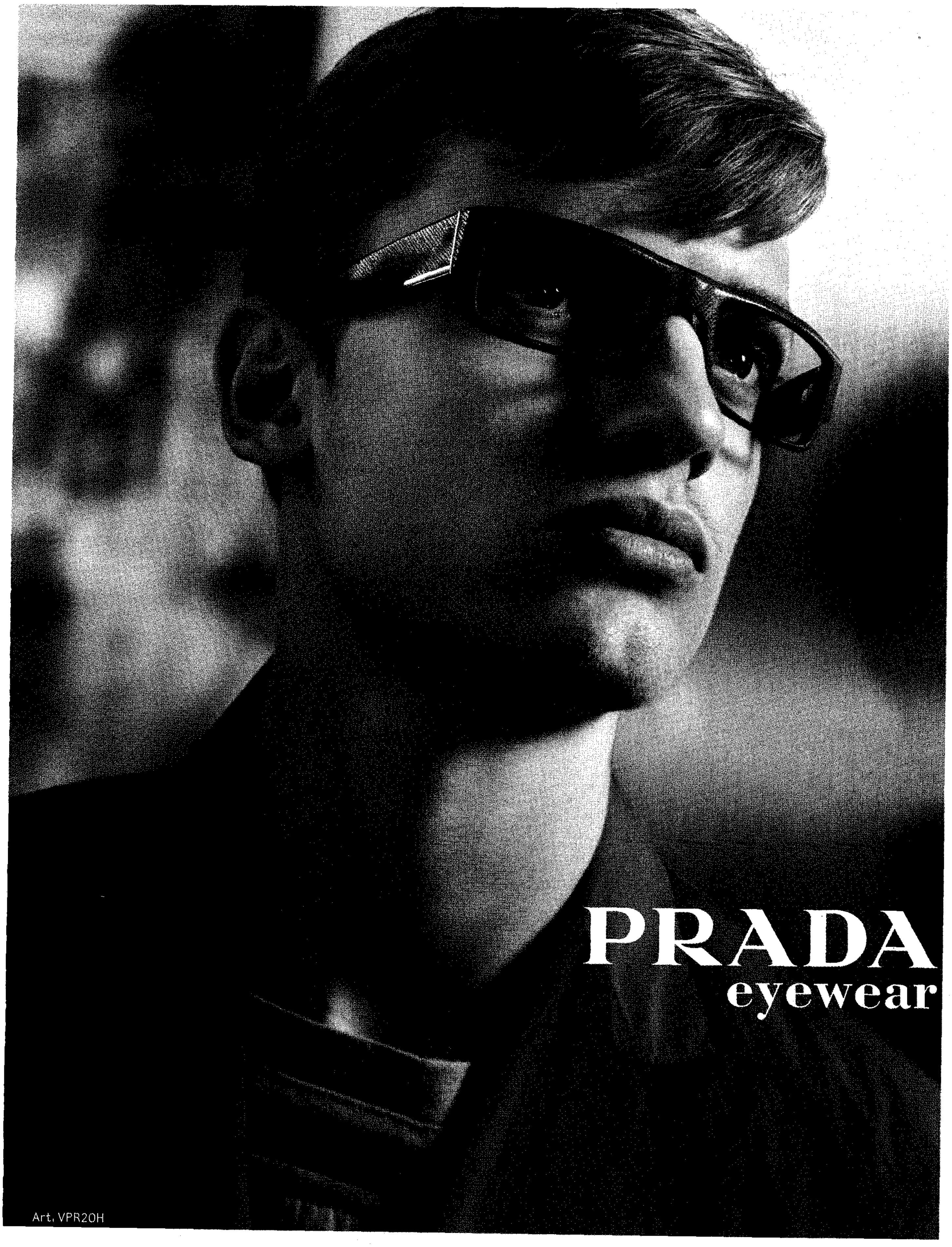
The Morgan Library's "Federico da Montefeltro and His Library," which opens June 8, examines the bibliophilic interests of the fifteenth-century Duke of Urbino and features a selection of illuminated manuscripts, an eagle-shaped lectern, and a contemporary portrait of the collector. The exhibition's gallery will be reimagined as a room in the Duke's palazzo, its walls covered with digital reproductions of inlaid wood panels and paintings. (See page 22.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
HIT THE ROAD

The summer's bountiful selection of regional concerts begins with events at two venerable small festivals in Connecticut, the Norfolk Chamber Music Festival (which features the guitarist Benjamin Verdery) and Music Mountain (with the pianist Peter Serkin). (See pages 30 and 32.)

MOVIES
RIGHTS AND WRONGS

The annual Human Rights Watch International Film Festival, at Walter Reade, offers documentaries and dramas about the day's issues, from global warming to prostitutes' rights. A screening of "Carla's List," about Carla Del Ponte, the head of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, will be followed by a discussion with Del Ponte and Richard Dicker, of Human Rights Watch. (See page 38.)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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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BADGE
A dark comedy by Matthew Schneck, about a twenty-eight-year-old Boy Scout who is liberated by his Scoutmaster's wild sister. Jenn Thompson directs. Previews begin June 15. Opens June 18. (Rattlestick, 224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444.)

BEYOND GLORY
Roundabout Theatre Company presents the New York première of Stephen Lang's one-man show, based on Larry Smith's book about war heroes. Robert Falls directs. In previews. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

THE BUTCHER OF BARABOO
In Marisa Wegrzyn's black comedy, Valerie, a butcher in Wisconsin, falls under suspicion when her husband disappears. Judith Ivey directs. Part of the Second Stage Theatre Uptown Festival. In previews. Opens June 11. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 212-246-4422.)

ELVIS PEOPLE
Doug Grissom's play looks at the ways in which Elvis Presley has influenced American culture. In previews. (New World Stages, Stage I, at 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

EURYDICE
Sarah Ruhl adapts the myth of Orpheus for this drama, in which Eurydice goes on a journey through the underworld to find her father. Les Waters directs. In previews. Opens June 18. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

THE FABULOUS LIFE OF A SIZE ZERO
Anna Chlumsky and Gillian Jacobs star in Marissa Kamin's play about a high-school senior who loses weight to fit in with the cool crowd. Previews begin June 14. Opens June 17. (DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

FALSETTOLAND
The National Asian American Theatre Company remounts this musical about Jewish angst, performed by an Asian-American cast. With music and lyrics by William Finn and a book by Finn and James Lapine. Previews begin June 14. Opens June 17. (Damson Theatre, 108 E. 50th St. 212-279-4200.)

FROM RIVERDALE TO RIVERHEAD
Studio Dante presents Anastasia Traina's comic drama about four women on a road trip to visit a relative in prison. Nick Sandow directs. In previews. Opens June 9. (257 W. 29th St. 212-868-4444.)

GONE MISSING
The Civilians present an updated version of their 2001 musical based on interviews with New Yorkers about things they have lost. Directed by Steven Cosson, with music and lyrics by Michael Friedman. Previews begin June 14. (Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200.)

THE GREENHOUSE EFFECT
Abingdon Theatre Company presents this one-man show written and performed by Michael Deep, about a man grappling with his troubled family. Kate Bushmann directs. In previews. Opens June 12. (312 W. 36th St. 212-868-4444.)

IN A DARK DARK HOUSE
MCC Theatre presents the world première of Neil LaBute's new play. Ron Livingston and Frederick Weller star; Carolyn Cantor directs. In previews. Opens June 7. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

MY TRIP TO AL-QAEDA
Encore performances of the play by Lawrence Wright (a writer for this magazine), based on his book about how Al Qaeda orchestrated the attacks of 9/11. June 5-6. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 212-307-4100.)

OLD ACQUAINTANCE
Margaret Colin and Harriet Harris star in this revival of John Van Druten's comedy from 1940. Michael Wilson directs the Roundabout Theatre Company production. In previews. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL
At the Mint, St. John Hankin's drama from 1905, about a British man who returns home to his wealthy father after a failed attempt to make it big in Australia. Jonathan Bank directs. Opens June 6. (311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231.)

ROMEO AND JULIET
Michael Greif directs this production, which begins the Public Theatre's Shakespeare in the Park season. Lauren Ambrose, Oscar Isaac, and Austin Pendleton star. In previews. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-539-8750.)

ST. JOAN OF THE STOCKYARDS
Lear deBessonet directs her adaptation of the Brecht play, set in Chicago in the nineteen-twenties. With original country-blues music by Kelley McRae. Previews begin June 16. Opens June 18. (P.S. 122, at 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-352-3101.)

THE SECOND TOSCA
Tom Rowan wrote this new comedy, set backstage at a rehearsal for "Tosca" in California. Kevin Newbury directs. Previews begin June 8. Opens June 13. (45th Street Theatre, 354 W. 45th St. 212-868-4444.)

SESSIONS
Albert Tapper wrote the book, music, and lyrics for this Algonquin Theatre production, a musical revolving around a therapist. In previews. Opens June 10. (Peter Jay Sharp, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

10 MILLION MILES
Atlantic Theatre Company presents a new musical featuring music and lyrics by Patty Griffin, about a young man and woman on a road trip from Florida to upstate New York. Keith Bunin wrote the book; Michael Mayer directs. In previews. Opens June 14. (336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

XANADU
Douglas Carter Beane wrote the book for this stage version of the movie from 1980, about a roller-skating muse in Venice Beach. Kerry Butler stars. In previews. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

CRAZY MARY
Sigourney Weaver stars in a new play by A. R. Gurney, about a wealthy woman and her son who visit a cousin in a mental hospital. Jim Simpson directs. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Through June 17.)

ESCAPE FROM BELLEVUE
Christopher John Campion's rock musical, with live music by Knockout Drops, about Campion's experiences in a rock band and as an escapee from a mental institution. Alex Timbers directs. (Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 212-307-7171.)

FATE'S IMAGINATION
Randall David Cook wrote this drama, about a senator from New York whose son is involved in a scandal with an older woman. (Player's Theatre, 115 MacDougal St. 212-352-3101. Through June 17.)

HORIZON
Rinde Eckert wrote, composed, and stars in a musical drama about a theologian who is pressured to resign from his seminary. David Schweizer directs. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE HOUSE OF BERNARDA ALBA
The National Asian American Theatre Company presents Federico García Lorca's play, about the daughters of a controlling matriarch, adapted and directed by Chay Yew. (Baruch Performing Arts Center, Nagelberg Theatre, 55 Lexington Ave., at 25th St. 212-279-4200.)

MARATHON 2007
The twenty-ninth festival of new one-act plays presented by Ensemble Studio Theatre. Playwrights include Julia Cho, Stephen Adly Guirgis, Amy Fox, and Neil LaBute. (549 W. 52nd St. 212-352-3101.)

NOW PLAYING

BEHIND THE LID
A new play written by Lee Nagrin and the puppeteer Basil Twist, about a woman in her seventies who travels through her dreams, featuring puppetry by Twist. (Silver Whale Gallery, 21 Bleecker St. 212-868-4444.)

BRITS OFF BROADWAY
"Rosebud: The Lives of Orson Welles" closes June 10, and Alan Ayckbourn's "Intimate Exchanges," a series of sixteen variations on one premise, with a different play each performance, continues its run. "Rabbit," written and directed by Nina Raine, starts previews June 5 and opens June 10; "Radio," by Al Smith, starts previews June 12 and opens June 17. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

TABLES FOR TWO
ED'S LOBSTER BAR

222 Lafayette St. (212-343-3236)—Pearl Oyster Bar, in the West Village, is the matriarch of downtown seafood shacks: in 2001, it spawned Mary's Fish Camp (Mary Redding was once a partner at Pearl), and, this spring, Ed's Lobster Bar (Ed McFarland cooked at Pearl for many years). Lately, lower Manhattan seems to be turning into one giant retrofitted clambake. Sun-kissed nostalgia is big at all three spots: aside from the homey names, each traffics in pie à la mode and presents the day's specials in chalk on a blackboard slate. Redding is said to have spun off after a falling-out, but McFarland doesn't seem interested in slaying the maritime mother. In fact, his place can suffer from second-generation complacency: when a trio of visitors arrived recently, a host said, "Three is difficult for us." The inconveniences of the original—an unaccommodating space, harried staff, the absence of overflow seating—are charming, in the way of an old beach house, but feel almost cynical in a new construction.

When it comes to cooking, however, imitation of one's elders is a perfectly salubrious, even commendable posture. Ed's lobster rolls taste a lot like Pearl's, which is to say, completely delicious. The lobster is chunky, not stringy; the rolls are butter-brushed; balmy mayonnaise is offset by a sprinkling of chives. Shrimp cocktail and oysters on the half shell are classics, thoughtfully prepared. Why McFarland didn't take equal care with the atmosphere is a mystery. What's with the random buoy? That the waitresses, in their clamdiggers and halter tops, bring to mind off-duty lifeguards shouldn't scare one away from the fancier offerings. Montauk bluefish, with Trapani truffle salt, for instance, is accompanied by a slew of woodsy mushrooms and mashed potatoes that possesses a surprising depth of flavor. Something's lost, though, in a room so loud that a waitress has to confirm an order of whole steamed lobster by holding up her hands and making little pincher motions. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays for lunch and dinner and Sundays for brunch and dinner. Entrées $15-$26.)

—*Lauren Collins*

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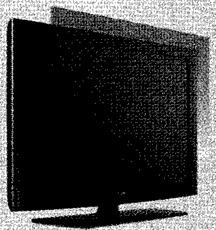

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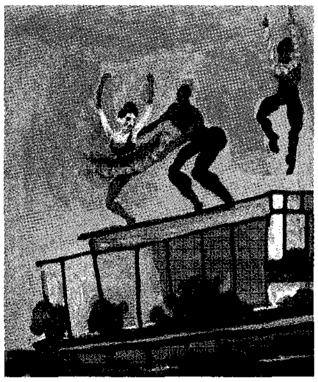
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
SKYWALKER

When people talk about Balanchine, they tend to stress either his classicism or his modernism. But, in addition to those nice, clean styles, he had a dreamier, spookier side, like that of the Neo-Romantic painters of the nineteen-thirties and forties, some of whom he used as his set designers.



DEMETRIOS PSILLOS

That part of his sensibility will be on show this week, when the Suzanne Farrell Ballet appears at the Kennedy Center, in Washington. Farrell, the reigning ballerina of Balanchine's late period, has devoted herself to keeping alive the spontaneity and musical verve that he fostered in his dancers. She has also revived a number of rarities. At the Kennedy Center, her troupe will perform the pas de deux from "Concierto de Mozart," which Balanchine made in 1942. (The set, by Pavel Tchelitchew, will not be reproduced, and maybe that's just as well. The designs are quite creepy.) In this duet, the man and the woman at first just walk side by side. Then, suddenly, she is in the air, in his arms, still walking, but in the sky. That's Balanchine: a straight shot from the world to the soul.

—*Joan Acocella*

PASSING STRANGE
A rock memoir by the singer-songwriter Stew. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

THE ROMANCE OF MAGNO RUBIO
The Ma-Yi Theatre Company revives its adaptation of a short story by Carlos Bulosan, which captures the weary lives of West Coast Filipino migrant workers in the nineteen-thirties. Magno Rubio (Jojo Gonzalez) stands four and a half feet tall and pines for an Arkansas beauty named Clarabelle, whose picture he discovered in a lonely-hearts magazine and whose love letters are peppered with solicitations for money and lavish gifts. Magno's farming buddies mock his naïve fixation on Clarabelle, who clearly symbolizes the perpetual tease of the American Dream, but we're left to wonder whether their disillusionment isn't also their loss. Under occasionally slack direction, Ma-Yi's endearing ensemble lends a bittersweet touch to this portrayal of American disenfranchisement. (Culture Project, 55 Mercer St. 212-352-3101. Through June 17.)

ROMEO AND JULIET
Not for the ambulatorily compromised. This adaptation, directed, choreographed, and composed by Ellen Stewart, La Mama's founder and artistic director, starts in the theatre lobby and leads the audience through four performance spaces and up and down a few flights of stairs. The perversely edited text is sung through, and it can safely be said that the words are much better than the music: the melodies are repetitive and rudimentary, and the singers, with just a couple of exceptions (there are twenty-six in the cast), sub-par. The use of the space is inventive, the sword fights are well done, and the instrumentalists are fine, but not much else in this jumbled piece works. (La Mama Annex, 66 E. 4th St. 212-475-7710. Through June 17.)

TEA
Velina Hasu Houston's 1987 play about five Japanese "war brides" resettled in Kansas shows its age in Tina Chen's uneven production, which has the earnest feel of a television movie. In 1968, four of the women gather in the tatami-mat-covered living room of their friend Himiko Hamilton (Karen Tsen Lee), who—after killing her abusive husband and losing her only child—shot herself in this very room. Now Himiko's ghost haunts the fringes of the gossipy tea party, entreating the living to forgive her and speed her passage to the next world. Himiko's melodramatic pronouncements contrast sharply with the naturalistic language of the tea-takers, a competitive, uneasy quartet drawn together by death. Their conversation meanders through feminism, assimilation, and homesickness, hitting the occasional flashpoint, but, just when the spats get interesting, they dissolve in a tide of sisterhood. (West End Theatre, 263 W. 86th St. 212-352-3101. Through June 17.)

OUT OF TOWN

BAY STREET THEATRE
Lonny Price directs Rebecca Lenkiewicz's play "The Night Season," about a film star who ends up in the home of three feisty sisters while working in Ireland. With Katherine Helmond and Michael O'Keefe. (Sag Harbor, N.Y. 631-725-9500.)

BERKSHIRE THEATRE FESTIVAL
Eric Hill directs "The Glass Menagerie," Tennessee Williams's classic play from 1944, at the Unicorn. For more information, visit www.berkshiretheatre.org. (Stockbridge, Mass. 413-298-5576.)

HUDSON VALLEY SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
On the tented outdoor stage at Boscobel, "Richard III," directed by Terrence O'Brien. Previews begin June 12. Opens June 16. For more information, visit www.hvshakespeare.org. (Garrison, N.Y. 845-265-9575.)

WILLIAMSTOWN THEATRE FESTIVAL
B. D. Wong stars in "Herringbone," a one-man musical about a child vaudeville star. Opens June 14. For a full festival schedule, visit www.wtfestival.org. (Williamstown, Mass. 413-597-3400.)

Also Playing

BLACKBIRD: City Center, Stage I, at 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Through June 10. **THE BRIG:** Living Theatre, 19-21 Clinton St. 212-352-3101. **A CHORUS LINE:** Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **COMPANY:** Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **CURTAINS:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **DEUCE:** Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **FROST/NIXON:** Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **GASLIGHT:** Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737. **GREY GARDENS:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **110 IN THE SHADE:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-239-6200. **INHERIT THE WIND:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **JOURNEY'S END:** Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. Through June 10. **LEGALLY BLONDE THE MUSICAL:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4100. **LOVEMUSIK:** Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **MARY POPPINS:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4747. **A MOON FOR THE MISBEGOTTEN:** Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100. Through June 10. **RADIO GOLF:** Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **SPRING AWAKENING:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **TALK RADIO:** Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **THE YEAR OF MAGICAL THINKING:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—June 7: **Dan Hicks** created the Hot Licks as a novelty opening act for his classic sixties San Francisco garage band, the Charlatans. The Charlatans are long gone, but the Licks live on. The drummerless acoustic group, built on the Django Reinhardt model, swings jazz, cowboy, and American pop, with female vocalists in close harmony behind Hicks's low-key, wry, and often very funny leadership. June 14: The crazed reggae producer **Lee (Scratch) Perry.** June 17: The saxophonist and bandleader **Maceo Parker** has a sterling funk résumé, having done stints with James Brown and George Clinton.

BEACON THEATRE
Broadway at 74th St. (212-307-7171)—June 10-11 and June 13: The acerbic FM rockers **Steely Dan.** June 16: **Madeleine Peyroux,** a singer who blends Billie Holiday-esque sass with country-and-Western spunk.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—June 11: **Maroon 5** first appeared five years ago with poppy, hook-laden rock, buoyed by the good looks and soulful vocals of its front man, Adam Levine. The group's début album, "Songs About Jane," served up several maddeningly inescapable singles, among them "This Love" and "She Will Be Loved." Now the pressure is on for the band to deliver the goods once again with its sophomore album, "It Won't Be Soon Before Long." June 16: The **Heartless Bastards** are a trio from Ohio who excise Midwestern ennui with intense blues rock. June 17: **Richard Cheese & Lounge Against the Machine.** As if their name didn't give away everything you could possibly need to know about their smarmy shtick, R.C. & L.A.T.M. is a novelty act that plays cocktail-lounge cover versions of material by artists ranging from Destiny's Child to Rush. It's a gimmick that, somewhat amazingly, has sustained them through five albums.

CARNEGIE HALL
57th St. at Seventh Ave. (212-247-7800)—June 13: **Pink Martini,** a mini-orchestra from Portland, Oregon, led by the classically trained pianist Thomas M. Lauderdale, sashays between Cuban rumbas, French café music, and myriad other genres. Its latest album, "Hey Eugene!," takes its title from a lightly funky tune about a

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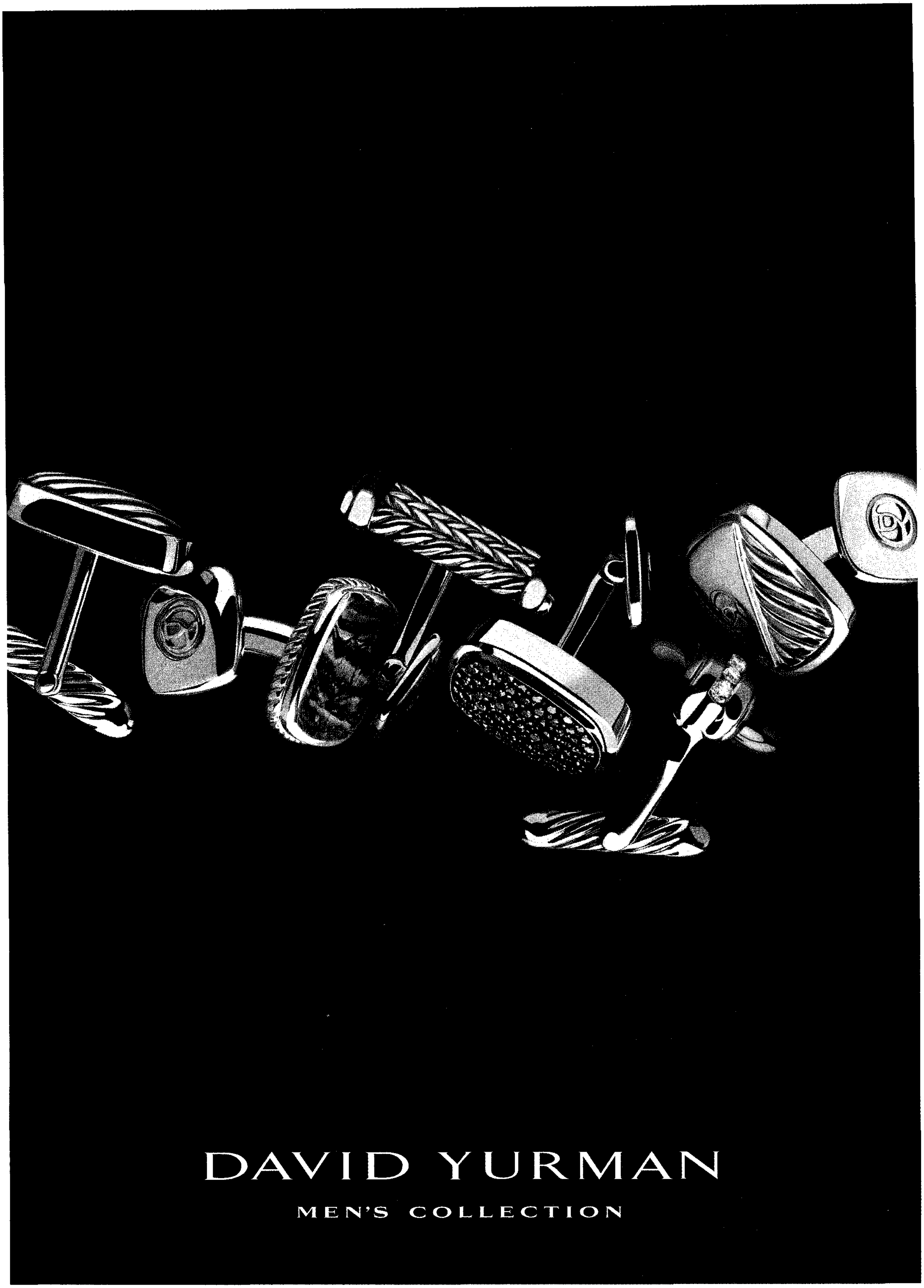
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missed romantic connection in New York City, written by the group's peerless vocalist, China Forbes.

CELEBRATE BROOKLYN!
Prospect Park Band Shell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St. (718-855-7862, ext. 45)—June 14: The **Neville Brothers,** from New Orleans, kick off the twenty-ninth season of music in Brooklyn's back yard. June 16: **Joan Osborne,** one of rock's most distinctive vocalists, has a sleepy new album of classic soul and R.&B. covers, "Breakfast in Bed." Joining her here are the saxophonist and composer Roy Nathanson and the **Jazz Passengers,** whose latest project takes on the music of the Supremes.

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. (212-360-2777)—The mostly free outdoor music series starts June 8, with a benefit appearance by the British soul phenom **Joss Stone,** who will be joined by the Brooklyn rapper **Common.** June 15: The versatile jazz vocalist **Cassandra Wilson.** June 16: The seminal punk-rock band **Television.** With the shiny pop of **Apples in Stereo** and the trippy soul rockers **Dragons of Zynth.**

FILLMORE NEW YORK AT IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—June 6-7: The loud, feedback-laden marvel known as **Dinosaur Jr.** was spawned in the mid-eighties in Amherst, Massachusetts, and before the end of the decade had established itself in the pantheon of college rock. The guitarist and singer J Mascis carried the band's name through the nineties (without the bassist Lou Barlow), but two years ago everyone patched things up. Now the original trio (rounded out by the drummer Murph) has a new album, "Beyond," which finds the band picking up right where it left off.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—June 6: The Los Angeles-based singer-songwriter **Eleni Mandell** was weaned on artists like Tom Waits and X, and her dark and sexy songs have been compared to those of everyone from Chan Marshall to Patsy Cline. She has a sometimes smoky, sometimes wistful delivery, and, more often than not, her songs take on love from some new perspective, be it driving on a wintry road ("Salt Truck") or imagining the subject of a lover's dreams ("Girls"), as she does on her new album, "Miracle of Five." June 11: **Florence Henderson** takes a musical look back at her show-biz career. June 14: The British rocker **Fionn O Lochlainn,** whose fans include Billy Bragg.

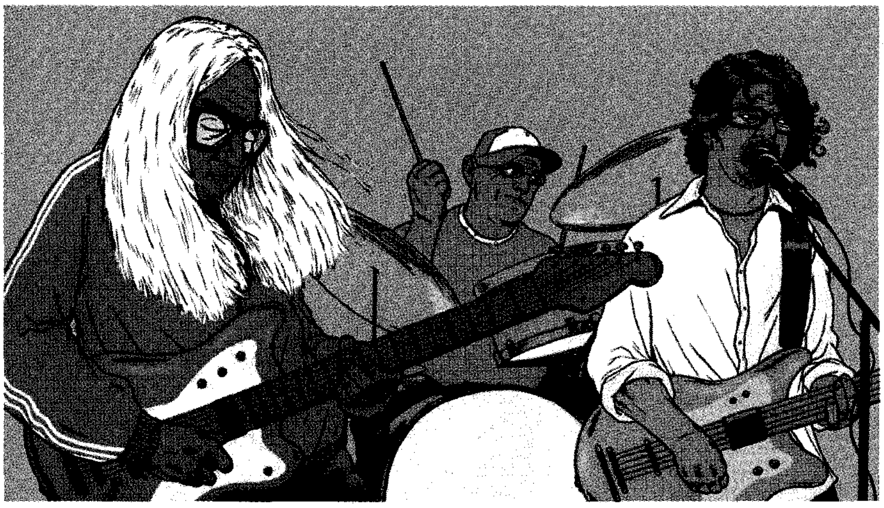
LIVING ROOM
154 Ludlow St. (212-533-7235)—June 7: **John Doe,** who rose to fame as the front man for the Los Angeles punk band X, delivers songs from his new solo album, "A Year in the Wilderness."

MIDSUMMER NIGHT SWING
The alfresco dancing at Lincoln Center commences on June 19 with a thunderous bang as **George Gee & His Make-Believe Ballroom Orchestra** take on **David Berger & the Sultans of Swing** in a battle of the bands; at its peak, the event promises some thirty musicians playing at the same time. (212-721-6500. Through July 21.)

RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL
Sixth Ave. at 50th St. (212-247-4777)—June 18: The "True Colors" concert unites some of the biggest names of the not so distant past, including **Cyndi Lauper, Erasure,** and **Debbie Harry,** with such up-and-coming acts as the **Dresden Dolls** and the **Gossip.** They are touring in the name of promoting equality and raising public consciousness about issues facing gay, lesbian, and transgender people; a portion of the ticket price goes to the Human Rights Campaign.

RIVER TO RIVER FESTIVAL
June 12: The reticent English songwriter **Joan Armatrading** makes a relatively rare New York City visit. Her new album, "Into the Blues," is an exploration of the essential American genre. (World Financial Center Plaza.) June 13: **Booker T and the MG's,** the studio band of the legendary Memphis label Stax in the sixties and early seventies, gets support from **Sharon Jones,** a powerhouse soul singer and erstwhile corrections officer. (Rockefeller Park, Battery Park City.) (For more information about this free downtown festival, visit www.rivertorivernyc.com.)

ROSELAND
239 W. 52nd St. (212-307-7171)—June 8-9: Sacramento's **Deftones** were lumped together with the nu-metal crowd because of their burly blend of rock, punctuated by vein-popping screams, but the band has evolved significantly through its twelve-year history, and the music now encompasses a progressively more expansive, cinematic scope. While the Deftones might still attract a nation of goateed skateboarders with tattoos aplenty, their music deserves more credit than it is generally afforded. June 12: The bewitchingly snarky English singer **Lily Allen** and her impudent, ska-inflected pop.



The reunited Dinosaur Jr. plays at the Fillmore New York at Irving Plaza.

SCOTT VINCENT

TOWN HALL
123 W. 43rd St. (212-840-2824)—The Canadian performer and Broken Social Scene alum **Feist** has matured from a purveyor of easy-listening music for the hipster set into a sharp singer-songwriter. She's here June 11-12 with songs from her new album, "The Reminder."

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—June 18: **Albert Hammond, Jr.,** the son of the singer-songwriter Albert Hammond, first gained attention as the corkscrew-haired guitarist for those dressed-down Manhattanites the Strokes. It turns out that Albert, Jr., is a songwriter in his own right; he's penned a few numbers for the Strokes, and he recently crafted a full LP of material. His début, "Yours to Keep" (featuring contributions by Sean Lennon, Ben Kweller, and the odd fellow-member of the Strokes), is a light, sunny affair.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—June 12-23: **Sarah Partridge** played the teen-age gamine who popped up in "Risky Business" with Tom Cruise, in 1983. Even a cursory listen to her music will assure you that the now mature Partridge has transformed herself into an assured singer of hearty standards. This run is in celebration of a new album, "You Are There: Songs for My Father."

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—June 6-9: The **James Carter Organ Trio.** Hearing Carter play with his compact and funky organ trio may be the best way to experience the full-frontal impact of the loquacious saxophonist. June 13-16: The **David Murray Black Saint Quartet.** It's cause for celebration any time the saxophonist Murray returns to the quartet setting and sturdy repertoire of his nineteen-eighties breakthrough period on the now defunct Black Saint Records. He's joined by the bassist **Ray Drummond,** the drummer **Andrew Cyrille,** and the pianist **Lafayette Gilchrist.**

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Fusion still holds a place in the hearts of veteran musicians who participated in the initial fermentation of jazz and rock and of younger players who are drawn to the intensity and freedom of the genre. **Trio Beyond** (here June 5-10), with the guitarist **John Scofield,** the drummer **Jack DeJohnette,** and the keyboardist **Larry Goldings,** patterns itself on the classic 1969 edition of Tony Williams's groundbreaking band Lifetime. June 12-13: The virtuosic Cuban pianist **Omar Sosa.** June 14-17: The pianist **Ramsey Lewis,** the host of cable television's "Legends of Jazz," has veered from mainstream jazz to R.&B. and back in a remarkable career that has spanned half a century.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—The formidable pianist **Eric Reed** headlines two promising programs. "West Coast Jazz" (June 5-10) gives New Yorkers a chance to hear the saxophonist **Jeff Clayton,** of Los Angeles's Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra, and "Tenor Madness" (June 12-17) features the duelling horns of **Seamus Blake** and **Stacy Dillard.**

FEINSTEIN'S AT LOEWS REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—June 5-16: No one can replace Bobby Short, the king of cabaret, but a celebrated admirer, **Michael Feinstein,** pays homage to the late standard-bearer.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—June 7-10: **Freddie Cole,** jazz's premier singer, gets first-class reinforcement from the tenor saxophonist **Houston Person.** June 13-17: The **Eddie Palmieri** trio. In descriptions of the pianist Palmieri, a legendary salsa player, the word "introverted" rarely appears. The rampaging keyboardist finds room onstage for the saxophonist **David Sanchez,** who will have to work hard to hold his own. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul,** who is celebrating his ninety-second birthday on June 11. The Mingus Big Band takes over on Tuesdays.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—June 7-10: **Nicholas Payton,** a stinging trumpeter as comfortable with New Orleans traditions as he is with mainstream jazz and contemporary funk, leads a quintet featuring the pianist **Kevin Hays.** June 14-17: The Hammond-organ revivalist **Joey DeFrancesco** is joined by the brawny-toned saxophonist **George Coleman,** a near-perfect match.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—June 5-17: The composer and pianist **Guillermo Klein** caused a stir among the cognoscenti during the late nineties with Los Gauchos, a large ensemble stocked with fresh new jazz players. Visiting from Spain, Klein reassembles the outfit with some of its star soloists, including the saxophonists **Chris Cheek** and **Bill McHenry** and the guitarist **Ben Monder.** The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

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MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Poiret: King of Fashion,"** a survey of the career of the Parisian designer Paul Poiret (1879-1944), is at the Costume Institute through Aug. 5. ♦ **"Neo Rauch at the Met: Para"** presents new paintings by the Leipzig-based artist. Through Oct. 14. ♦ **"Impressionist and Early Modern Paintings: The Clark Brothers Collect."** Sibling rivalry was played out in galleries, studios, auction houses, and museums for Robert Sterling Clark (1877-1956), founder of the art institute that bears his name in Williamstown, Massachusetts, and Stephen Carlton Clark (1882-1960), a noted trustee of and donor to the Met. This exhibit gathers the outstanding Cézannes, Seurats, Homers, Sargents, Picassos, and more that the brothers competed for and collected. Through Aug. 19. ♦ **"Frank Stella on the Roof."** Through Oct. 28. ♦ **"Frank Stella: Painting Into Architecture"** presents the prolific artist's designs for architectural structures. Through Aug. 5. ♦ **"Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797."** Through July 8. ♦ **"One of a Kind: The Studio Craft Movement."** Through Sept. 3. ♦ The Met's new permanent Greek and Roman galleries are now open. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Richard Serra Sculpture: Forty Years."** Through Sept. 10. ♦ **"Picasso's 'Demoiselles d'Avignon' at 100."** Through Aug. 27. ♦ **"Projects 85: Dan Perjovschi."** The title of the Romanian artist Perjovschi's wall covered with markered political cartoons, "WHAT HAPPENED TO US?," is meant as a double-entendre: it could mean either you and me, or the United States of America. Actually, pretty much everyone—you, me, the U.S., and the E.U. (which Romania joined in January of this year)—is implicated in this wall of shame. Perjovschi simultaneously pokes fun at and critiques everything from capitalism and power to war, peace, oil, globalization, and freedom. The work is a crowd-pleaser. It's smart and funny—although, when you chuckle over zingers like "I am not exotic, I am exhausted," or find yourself laughing at sad jokes about immigration, the humor turns rueful. Through Aug. 27. ♦ **"Comic Abstraction: Image Making, Image Breaking."** Through June 11. ♦ **"Barry Frydlender: Place and Time."** Through Sept. 3. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—The telescoping spiral of Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim rotunda is in the midst of a summerlong restoration project, so it's a timely moment to consider how geometry sculpts the void. **"The Shapes of Space"** culls works from the permanent collection and will evolve over the summer, moving upward as the renovation progresses. The first installment is a primer on the abstract grid, glamorized with the addition of Alyson Shotz's undulating screen of lenticular films and Piotr Uklanski's flashing dance floor. A wildly multigenerational roster puts Ricci Albenda next to Naum Gabo and Piet Mondrian near Sarah Morris. On June 15, ramps three and four will extend to considerations of architectural and psychological space by Louise Bourgeois and Robert Gober, among others. Through Sept. 5. ♦ **"Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum: Restoring a Masterpiece."** Through July 8. ♦ **"Divisionism/Neo-Impressionism: Arcadia and Anarchy."** Through Aug. 6. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—**"Summer of Love: Art of the Psychedelic Era."** Through Sept. 16. ♦ **"Lincoln Kirstein"** honors the late, great aesthete, connoisseur, and impresario on the centenary of his birth, with an exhibition of work by artists he championed, including Walker Evans, Elie Nadelman, and Pavel Tchelitchew. Through Aug. 27. ♦ **"Taryn Simon: An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar."** Through June 24. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Gold."** Through Aug. 19. ♦ **"Mythic Creatures: Dragons, Unicorns, and Mermaids."** Through Jan. 6. ♦ The newly opened Anne and Bernard Spitzer Hall of Human Origins explores the science of evolution. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Kindred Spirits: Asher B. Durand and the American Landscape."** Through July 29. ♦ The inaugural exhibition in the new Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, **"Global Feminisms,"** gathers work made since 1990 by eighty-seven women in more than fifty countries. Through July 1. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—**"Biographical Landscape: The Photography of Stephen Shore, 1969-79."** Through Sept. 9. ♦ **"Let Your Motto Be Resistance: African-American Portraits."** Through Sept. 9. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"The Sculpture of Louise Nevelson: Constructing a Legend."** Through Sept. 16. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, and Thursdays, 11 to 8.)

MORGAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM
225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—**"From Berlin to Broadway: The Ebb Bequest of Modern German and Austrian Drawings."** Forty-three drawings and watercolors dating from the early twentieth century, from the collection of the lyricist Fred Ebb, who left them to the Morgan upon his death, in 2004. Through Sept. 2. ♦ **"Apocalypse Then: Medieval Illuminations from the Morgan."** Through June 17. ♦ **"Federico da Montefeltro and His Library."** Opens June 8. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

MUSEO DEL BARRIO
Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (212-831-7272)—In **"The Disappeared (Los Desaparecidos),"** fourteen artists examine legacies of kidnapping, torture, and vanishment in Latin America. Through June 17. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5.)

MUSEUM OF ARTS & DESIGN
40 W. 53rd St. (212-956-3535)—**"Radical Lace & Subversive Knitting."** Through June 17. (Open daily, 10 to 6; and Thursday evenings until 8.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. (212-534-1672)—**"Facing Fascism: New York and the Spanish Civil War."** Through Aug. 12. ♦ **"The *Jewish Daily Forward*: Embracing an Immigrant Community."** Through Sept. 17. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

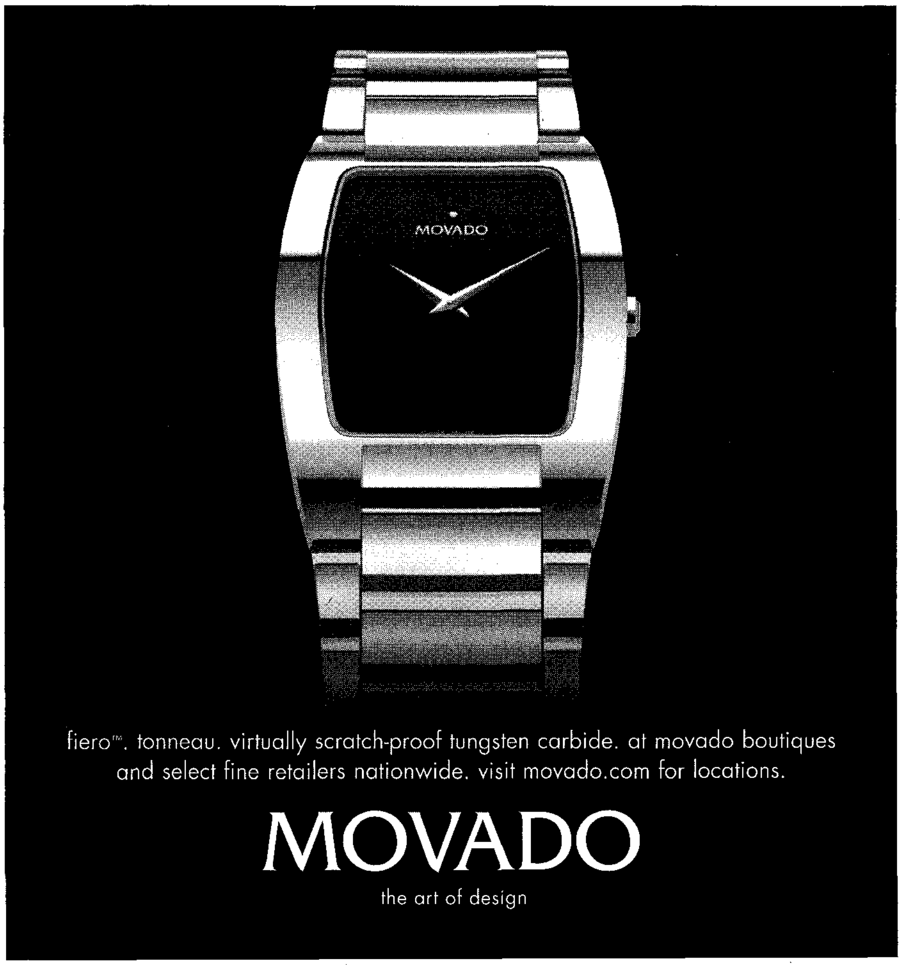
NATIONAL ACADEMY MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-369-4880)—**182nd Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Art.** Through June 24. (Open Wednesdays and Thursdays, noon to 5, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—**"Van Gogh and Expressionism."** Through July 2. (Open Thursdays, and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 11 to 9.)

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (212-869-8089)—**"Making the Scene: The Midtown Y Photography Gallery, 1972-1996."** Through Sept. 16. (Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 7:30, Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 1 to 5.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Philosophy of Time Travel,"** a collaborative installation by Edgar Arceneaux, Vincent Galen Johnson, Olga Koumoundouros, Rodney McMillian, and Matthew Sloly. Through July 1. ♦ **"Henry Taylor: Sis and Bra."** Through July 1. ♦ **"Silhouette: Collection in Context."** Through July 1. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6, and Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN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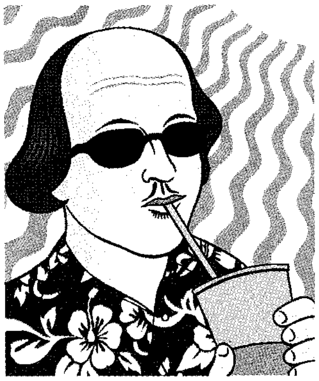
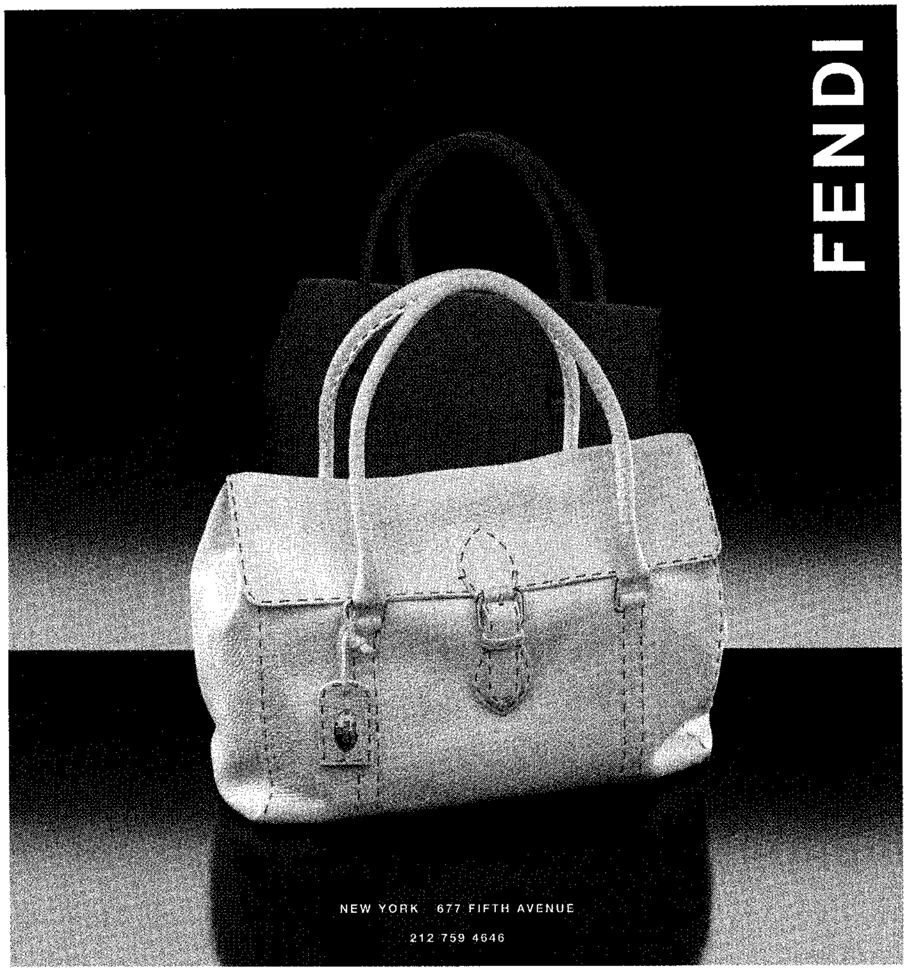
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
SUMMER'S LEASE

Weeks after students retire their complete Folger Shakespeare in favor of Michael Chabon and the beach, a number of regional theatre companies break out the dramaturges and delve into inspired productions of ancient texts. Last month, the Shakespeare Festival of St. Louis offered junior-high and high-school students the opportunity to perform in "Much Ado About Nothing." The students acted for ten to fifteen minutes before another group took over—a Shakespearean relay race of sorts. The estimable Oregon Shakespeare Festival mounts "The Tempest," a late work that illustrates the metaphor's power to bewitch us. Here in town, the always solid Public Theatre's Shakespeare in the Park is putting on "Romeo and Juliet," starring Lauren Ambrose and Oscar Isaac. These local offerings bring to mind the greasepaint-and-spangles atmosphere of high-school productions where passionate performers and ambitious directors not only make Shakespeare come alive for novice theatregoers but make them want to serve the life of the stage, too.



—*Hilton Als*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GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Summer-hours warning: Many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.

JOCELYN LEE
Lee's color photographs of family, friends, and willing acquaintances have real weight and feeling. They're careful but frank: a middle-aged woman, seated naked on an unmade bed, appears tired and undefended, but there's no cruelty, no satire in the portrait, only tenderness. The photographer's mother, slumped in a white nightgown, looks like she just woke up and is already defeated; Lee comforts her with a sheen of morning light but understands that shadows might be even more reassuring. Many of Lee's other subjects are young, several are nude, and the work as a whole might remind you of Katie Grannan's, Judith Joy Ross's, or Rineke Dijkstra's because it's just as idiosyncratic and intense. Through June 16. (Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 212-759-7999.)

DAMIÁN ORTEGA
A shiny, black twenty-foot obelisk stands on a tiny, tidy patch of lawn, which is in turn affixed to a platform mounted on swivelling wheels. The monument is mobile (at least in theory; for the purposes of this showing, it's been bolted to the pavement), and thus easily relocated to whatever place might have immediate need for commemoration. The mode is funny, but there's a disturbing undercurrent: the sombre color denotes mourning, and there are too many places that might command the use of a memorial just now. The artist has a background as a political cartoonist (in his home country of Mexico), and that brand of realism, humor, and cynicism is in evidence here. Through Oct. 28. (Doris C. Freedman Plaza, Fifth Ave. at 60th St. For more information, see www.publicartfund.org.)

PAUL PFEIFFER
Pfeiffer's interest in race, celebrity, and transcendence has, in the past, led to meditations on the video image as it exalts and entraps pro athletes, and to reflections on superstar casualties like Michael Jackson and Marilyn Monroe. Here, he returns to Jackson, with a diptych focussed on a 2003 televised statement in which the eerie suzerain of Neverland replied to charges of child molestation. In one room, a monitor screens Jackson's speech, without sound. Next door, a red-tinted wall projection shows a chorus of eighty young men and women declaiming the statement in unison. It's beautifully framed, like all Pfeiffer's work, but doesn't quite hit his usual balance between muscularity and evanescence. Through June 22. (The Project, 37 W. 57th St. 212-688-4673.)

Short List

JOHN CONSTABLE: Salander-O'Reilly, 22 E. 71st St. 212-879-6606. Through June 16. **WILLEM DE KOONING:** Starr, 5 E. 73rd St. 212-570-1739. Through June 8. **DON DOE:** Mosler, 35 E. 67th St. 212-249-4195. Through June 16. **ROBERT HEINECKEN:** Roth, 160A E. 70th St. 212-717-9067. Through June 16. **JAMES WELLING:** Horticultural Society of New York, 148 W. 37th St., 13th fl. 212-757-0915, ext. 113. Through June 29. **"BENEATH THE UNDERDOG" / TAKASHI MURAKAMI:** Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave. 212-744-2313. Through June 16 and June 9, respectively. **"A CENTURY AND A HALF IN THE ART BUSINESS":** Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 212-535-5767. Through June 23. **"CONCEPTUAL PHOTOGRAPHY 1964-1989":** Zwirner & Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 212-517-8677. Through June 23. **"PICASSO, BRAQUE, AND EARLY FILM IN CUBISM":** PaceWildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 212-421-3292. Through June 23.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

RICCI ALBENDA
Albenda's smooth geometric reliefs in white plaster are set seamlessly into white walls, as if the gallery were half empty room, half Art Deco spaceship. The results are sexy, peculiar, and decorative; Albenda's peril lies only in repeating the winning formula. Here, he mixes and matches to good effect. A long wall carving bulges like a fish-eye lens to a five-hundred-and-forty-degree panorama. This faces a black-and-white video panning across a corner very like the one into which it projects—occasionally the pan stops, clicking the virtual image into the actual architecture, and then it starts again with a seasick lurch. The back room hosts smaller sculptures and drawings. Through June 16. (Kreps, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-741-8849.)

WAYNE GONZALES
Gonzales's new paintings perform the synthetic-vision trick made famous by Impressionism and seen in choice passages of Velázquez or Frans Hals. Up close, they melt into slurry clumps of brushwork; step back and a soft-focus picture emerges. Crowd scenes culled from the Internet provide the fodder. Alternately cheering or standing in stilled silence, the masses conjure Debord's ruminations in "The Society of the Spectacle" or, more likely, the oft-reproduced book jacket. While Gonzales isn't didactic or direct in his view of crowds, one senses, from the dark grayscale palette, his history of making pointedly political works, and the faceless passivity of his subjects (some could be *vanitas* skulls), that we're not talking "The Wisdom of Crowds" here, but something distinctly more sinister. Through June 29. (Cooper, 521 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105.)

ANDREAS GURSKY
Having already made some of the biggest, most spectacular, and, arguably, most important photographs of our time, Gursky faces impossible expectations with each new show and is bound to leave many of them unfulfilled. He continues to focus on the wonders of the world, including the pyramid at Giza, seen up close as a solid wall of bricks, and a Japanese space observatory whose walls appear to be lined with enormous gold beads. A series of twenty-foot-long images depict the swarming pit stops on a Formula One track and ranks of glassed-in observers above. Each of these photographs is a marvel of digital technology; the best of them are as close as photography can get to feats of the imagination. Through June 30. (Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. and 523 W. 24th St. 212-243-0200.)

BRANDON LATTU
How many things can you do with a photograph? Lattu scans and manipulates his images so that they look more like Photo-Realist paintings, or bends them into genre-defying sculptures; one uses images of Inigo Jones's seventeenth-century Banqueting Hall, in London, complete with ceiling panels painted by Rubens, to form a bulging object like a large treasure chest. The rear-gallery slide show of images taken in the last ten years is the most straightforward presentation, a wide-eyed Stephen Shore-style wander through the world. But even these hundred and sixty snapshots have something to say about how the camera structures vision, perception, and knowledge. Through June 9. (Koenig, 545 W. 23rd St. 212-334-9255.)

RALPH LEMON
Lemon is better known as a dancer and choreographer than as a visual artist, but this show of installation-based works reveals that he's no slouch at composing and arranging objects and images. Videos show a kind of doppelgänger, the ninety-nine-year-old Mississippian Walter Carter, shuffling around his farmhouse. His movements are slow and deliberate, but mesmerizing in their own quiet way. "Attic Space," outfitted with light fixtures, wallpaper, and photographs, and "Spaceship," crafted from the truncated bow of a motorboat, serve as metaphors for being physically and mentally transported. Even the light-hearted line-drawn animated video in the elevator might keep you riding up and down between floors longer than is technically required. Through June 23. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793.)

JASON MEADOWS / PEGGY PREHEIM
In narrative structure, the tale-within-a-tale can mark fracture points between hallucination and reality. Meadows adapts the concept using two famous examples, "Frankenstein" and "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland." A mad-scientist laboratory mocked up from faux-wood-grain bookshelves and a White Rabbit-themed shooting gallery in lime-green Plexiglas make a certain visual sense, and the assemblages' manic ugliness is meant to reference not only literature but shlock pop culture. In the upstairs gallery, Preheim's tiny, ultra-fastidious pencil drawings, black-and-white photographs, and clay medallions translate the kitsch of Meadows's installation to realms of corseted madness and fever dream. Through June 16. (Bonakdar, 521 W. 21st St. 212-414-4144.)

ZOE STRAUSS
The first photograph in Strauss's New York début show is of scrawled graffiti: "If you reading this fuck you." You've been warned. Strauss had a slide show in the 2006 Whitney Biennial (there's another one in the back room here), but she makes a much stronger, if occasionally alarming, impression with this group of framed and unframed color prints. Her subjects are unapologetically down and out: a crack smoker, a badly battered woman, and various no-nonsense street people, as well as a slew of trashed and battered sites (some the result of Hurricane Katrina). The images are tough, frontal, pitiless. This is not America the Beautiful, and Strauss wants us to know it as intimately as she does. Through June 23. (Silverstein, 535 W. 24th St. 212-627-3930.)

RICHARD TUTTLE
Tuttle's signature post-minimalist, pared-down-to-the-point-of-almost-not-being-there sculptures (which he historically preferred to call "drawings") are more elaborate, snazzy, and decorative than the provocations that created an uproar and made him famous in the wake of his 1975 Whitney Museum exhibition. Textured watercolor paper, wood, aluminum foil, and bits of yarn, wire, and tissue paper are cut and arranged into sharp little compositions. Sixty of them, each about the size of an index card, are mounted in a line snaking around the gallery wall. Some of the motifs look like designs you'd find on pottery in the artist's second home in New Mexico, which isn't necessarily a good thing. Others retain the hard-core, unapologetic simplicity of his earlier days. Through June 30. (Sperone Westwater, 415 W. 13th St. 212-999-7337.)

"STILL LIFE AND KICKING"
The genre of still-life lends itself to the celebration of pleasure, and many of the works here were commissioned for an editorial project in *Vogue*. Some might distrust this luxe confluence, but the excellent results speak for themselves. Rachel Harrison contributes her usual mad and brilliant bric-a-brac, here set tête-à-tête with two provocative lumps by her stylistic godfather, Franz West. Sherrie Levine makes *belle-laide* wallpaper, Paul Chan animates a Caravaggio fruit bowl, and Elizabeth Peyton quotes the famous Mapplethorpe portrait of the quintessential style rebel Patti Smith. With John Baldessari, Maurizio Cattelan, Pipilotti Rist, and Lawrence Weiner, among others. Through June 8. (Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105.)

Short List

KAI ALTHOFF AND NICK Z: Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 212-206-9300. Through June 16. **ASSUME VIVID ASTRO FOCUS:** Connelly, 625 W. 27th St. 212-337-9563. Through June 30. **GLENN BROWN:** Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111. Through June 9. **BRUCE DAVIDSON / STEPHEN SHAMES:** Aperture, 547 W. 27th St. 212-505-5555. Through Aug. 2. **ROB FISCHER:** Cohan and Leslie, 138 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 212-206-8710. Through June 16. **ANDY GOLDSWORTHY:** Lelong, 528 W. 26th St. 212-315-0470. Through June 16. **TIM HAWKINSON:** PaceWildenstein, 545 W. 22nd St. 212-989-4258. Through June 9. **MR.:** Lehmann Maupin, 540 W. 26th St. 212-255-2923. Through June 23. **JOAN MITCHELL:** Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727. Through June 16. **MIKE QUINN:** Buia, 541 W. 23rd St. 212-366-9915.

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Through June 9. **ROBIN RHODE:** Rubenstein, 527 W. 23rd St.; 526 W. 24th St.; 534 W. 24th St. 212-627-8000. Through June 23. **HAIM STEINBACH:** Sonnabend, 536 W. 22nd St. 212-627-1018. Through June 30. **FRANK STELLA:** Kasmin, 293 Tenth Ave., at 27th St. 212-563-4474. Through July 6. **JULIANNE SWARTZ:** Bienvenu, 529 W. 20th St. 212-206-7990. Through July 6.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

TINA BARNEY

Barney's style of portraiture often involves several people and has always teetered between theatricality and naturalism, teasing both. This group of twelve mostly large-scale color photographs from China makes conscious reference to nineteenth-century travellers' albums but is at pains to avoid tourist clichés. Although Barney spends a lot of time with performers, making the question of staging spontaneity more explicit than usual, her best pictures seem to catch her subjects slightly off guard. She's even better when she gets backstage, as it were, into people's homes. Like so many adolescents trapped in the same room with a parent, the distracted boy in "The Teenage Son" looks like he wants to be anywhere but there. Through June 16. (Borden, 560 Broadway, at Prince St. 212-431-0166.)

ZILVINAS KEMPINAS

Kempinas, master of the uncommon medium of unspooled videotape, has made an installation composed of hundreds of lengths of the stuff, stretched taut across a nine-by-twenty-foot rectangle cut in the gallery wall, backlit, and gently fluttered by fans. While perhaps not as mind-boggling as previous projects (in 2004, he floated a giant loop of tape around the perimeter of the gallery with fans; visitors stepped into the center of the room double-dutch style when it rose or dipped to a practical height), it is downright dizzying when viewed up close. The title ("White Noise") and the effect (it's like staring into an old television set whose rabbit ears have hopped away) conjure the faster and faster evolution of technology, which has left Kempinas's medium itself in the dust. Through June 9. (Spencer Brownstone, 39 Wooster St. 212-334-3455.)

"THE MUSEUM OF CRIME AND THE MUSEUM OF GOD"

The first item in this exhibition is a framed announcement for the baptism of its curator, whose full name turns out to be Luc Marie-Joseph-François-Ghislain Sante. This document of Catholic excess is followed by almost a hundred others, culled from the collection of the author of "Low Life," "Evidence," and "The Factory of Facts." Gruesome and lush, the array includes tintype portraits, dime-novel covers, police-evidence photographs, postcards, cartes de visite, black-bordered death letters, saints' medals, and spirit photographs, all backed by a sexy-mournful collage of torch songs and hymns. "Crime and religion," writes Sante, "are competing mystery cults." His show is a shrine. Through June 23. (ApexArt, 291 Church St. 212-431-5270.)

Short List

GEORG BASELITZ: Nolan, 560 Broadway, at Prince St. 212-925-6190. Through June 30. **LEONARD FREED:** Leica, 670 Broadway, at Bond St. 212-777-3051. Through June 16. **TIM HAWKINSON:** Nyehaus, 15 Gramercy Park S. 212-995-1785. Through June 16. **"BEYOND THE WHITE CUBE: A RETROSPECTIVE OF BRIAN O'DOHERTY/PATRICK IRELAND":** Grey Art Gallery, 100 Washington Sq. E. 212-998-6780. Through July 14.

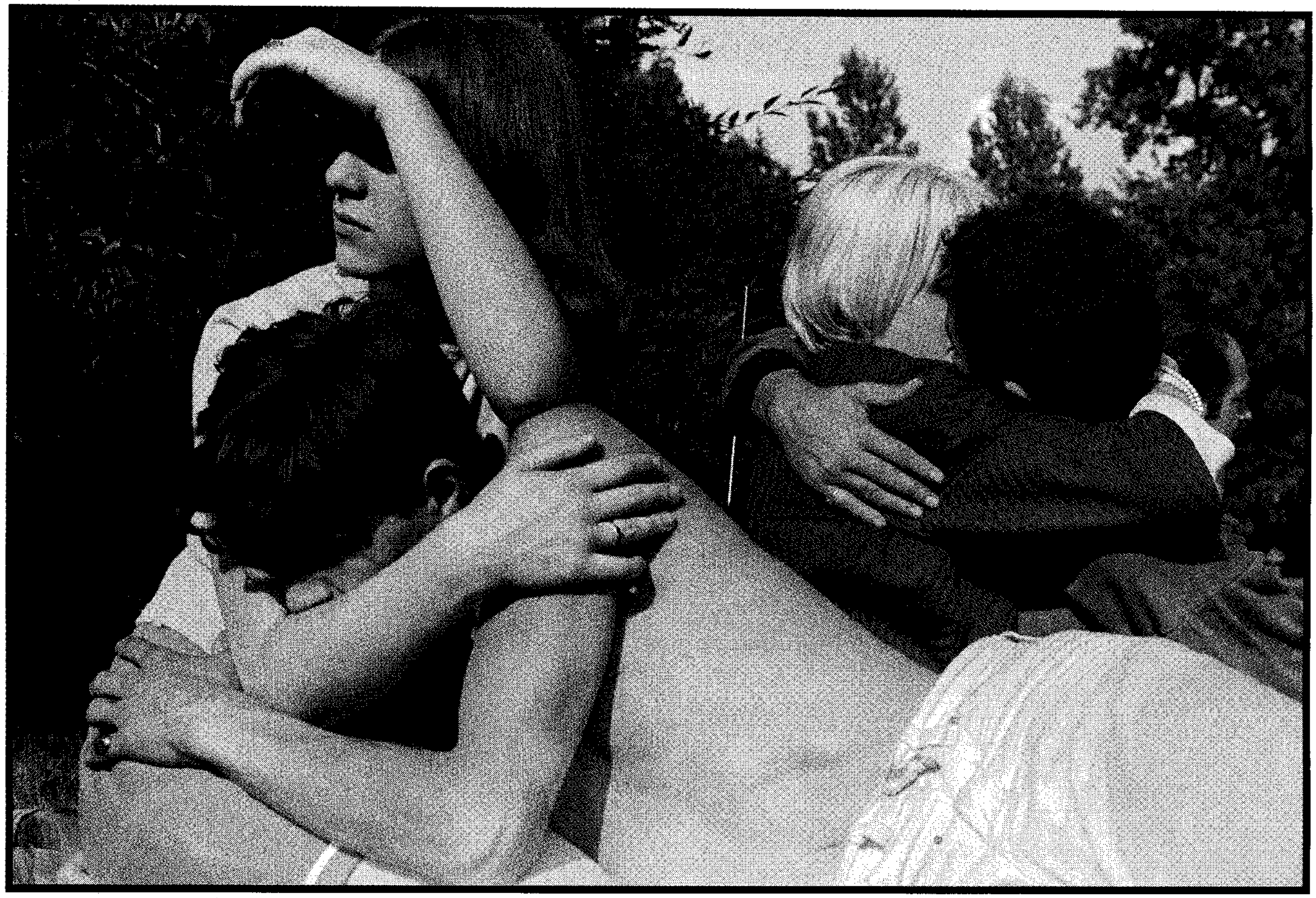
DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET

The much anticipated collaboration between Christopher Wheeldon—who will be leaving the company next year—and N.Y.C.B.'s resident composer, Bright Sheng, will be revealed on June 8, as part of a program (blandly titled "Tradition and Innovation") that includes Balanchine's late, dark ballet "Robert Schumann's 'Davidsbündlertänze'" and Peter Martins's playful "Jeu de Cartes." Wheeldon's "The Nightingale and the Rose" is based on Oscar Wilde's love story of the same name, a meditation on the beauty and the essential futility of sacrifice; in what seems like inspired casting, Wendy Whelan will dance the part of the truehearted Nightingale, opposite the graceful Tyler Angle as the shallow student and the expansive Sara Mearns as his indifferent love interest. ♦ June 6 at 7:30, June 9 at 8, and June 16 at 2: "Concerto Barocco," "Tribute," and "Brandenburg." ♦ June 7 at 8: "Serenade," "Les Gentilhommes," and "Union Jack." ♦ June 8 and June 16 at 8 and June 17 at 3: "Jeu de Cartes," "The Nightingale and the Rose," and "Robert Schumann's 'Davidsbündlertänze.'" ♦ June 9 at 2: "Rubies," "The Nightingale and the Rose," and "Union Jack." ♦ June 10 at 3: "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," "Liebeslieder Walzer," and "Symphony in Three Movements." ♦ June 12 at 7:30 and June 14 at 8: "Jewels." ♦ June 13 and June 19 at 7:30 and June 15 at 8: "Raymonda Variations," "Dybbuk Variations," and "Stravinsky Violin Concerto." (Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. Through June 24.)

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE

On the evening of June 6, the smoldering Kirov ballerina Diana Vishneva will have her début in the role of Aurora in the company's new production of "The Sleeping Beauty," with David Hallberg as her Prince and Herman Cornejo as the charming Bluebird; at the June 9 matinée, the dynamic Gillian Murphy will perform the part of Aurora, partnered by Hallberg. Then it's on to two ballets by Kenneth MacMillan, "Manon" and "Romeo and Juliet." On June 11 and June 14, the role of the irresistible, poisonous Manon (the ballet is based on Abbé Prévost's tale of sex and moral corruption "Manon Lescaut") will be danced by the impetuous and lovely Alessandra Ferri (who,



"Leonard Freed: A Memorial Retrospective," at Leica through June 16, includes "Couples, West Berlin" (1965).

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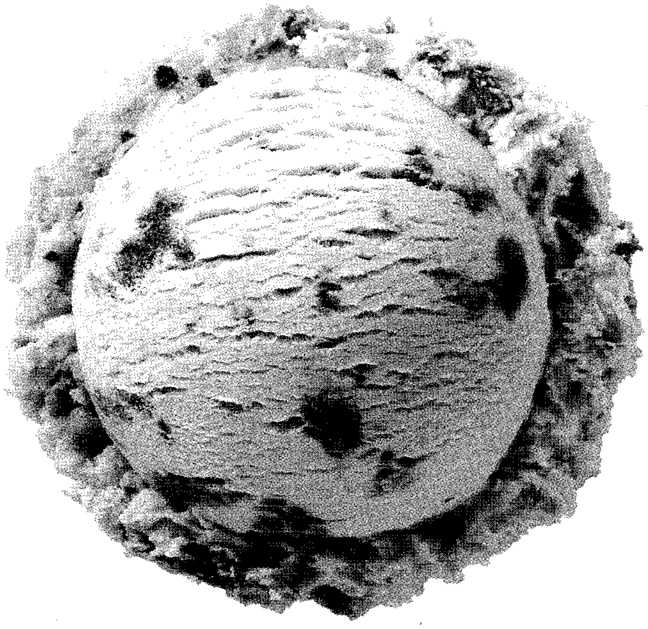

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at forty-four, retires from A.B.T. this season), alongside the guest dancer Roberto Bolle, from La Scala, and Cornejo as the irrepressible corruptor, Manon's brother, Lescaut. ♦ June 5 and June 7-8 at 8 and June 6 and June 9 at 2 and 8: "The Sleeping Beauty." ♦ June 11-12 and June 14-15 at 8 and June 13 and June 16 at 2 and 8: "Manon." ♦ June 18-19 at 8: "Romeo and Juliet." (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000. Through July 7.)

MOMIX
At the Joyce, Moses Pendleton's amazingly flexible, strong, and willing dancers present "MOMIX Remix," a best-of anthology from the past quarter century. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. June 5-6 at 7:30, June 7-8 at 8, June 9 at 2 and 8, and June 10 at 2 and 7:30.)

NOCHE FLAMENCA
Last year, the performances by the beloved flamenco troupe ended with a tribute to the dead; this year's show, "Aldaba," opens with a celebration of life. The burly, august Alejandro Granados returns, joined by the short and stocky Alfonso Losa. A female trio sounds the great Spanish theme of women emotionally abandoned by men. And the company's star, Soledad Barrio, dives deeply in her famous *soleá*. A New York summer tradition for ten years now, this is flamenco at its intimate, traditional best. (Theatre 80, at 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-352-3101. June 6-8 and June 13-15 at 8, June 9 and June 16 at 2 and 8, and June 10 and June 17 at 2 and 5. Through July 29.)

"FLAMENCO PA' DOS"
According to Newton's third law, forces always come in pairs, and so it is with Nélida Tirado's new flamenco show, whose title translates as "Flamenco for Two." Here we get two of everything: guitarists, singers, percussionists, and, yes, dancers, with David Paniagua (an up-and-coming artist from Seville) and Tirado, an explosive dancer and a true force of nature. Born in New York and trained with Ballet Hispánico and various Spanish masters, Tirado captures the austere, introspective essence of traditional flamenco. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. June 7 at 7:30.)

DANIEL GWIRTZMAN DANCE COMPANY
"Encore" is both the title of Gwirtzman's new dance suite and the response it's likely to inspire. The name refers to the repetitions of rehearsal, as a fictional troupe of Broadway dancers prepares to go on the road, but there's little tedium in Gwirtzman's choreography, set to classic jazz recordings. Executing his tricky syncopations and intricate patterns at breakneck tempos, the dancers can't help but smile. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. June 7-9 at 8.)

CEDAR LAKE CONTEMPORARY BALLET
The well-heeled West Side troupe makes intelligent use of its deep pockets, bringing in Ohad Naharin to stage his greatest-hits collection, "Decadance." Ranging across twenty years' worth of the Israeli choreographer's output, the compilation—including a new, gesture-rich section made for Cedar Lake—stretches the company. More important, Naharin's direction draws out the dancers' individuality and encourages understated exactness. (547 W. 26th St. 212-868-4444. June 7-9 and June 12-16 at 8 and June 10 and June 17 at 7. Through July 1.)

"SCOURGE"
This hip-hop theatre production, presented by Marc Bamuthi Joseph and the Living Word Project, takes on the legacy of Haiti, the first black republic and the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Skillfully mixing spoken word with contemporary and Haitian folkloric dance, the show addresses color prejudice, assimilation, and the many meanings of possession, more concerned with intra-group tension than external oppression. If some of the histrionics seem forced, the free-associative logic has a seductive flow, and the versatile musicians practice what the text preaches, honoring multiple traditions with ease. Rennie Harris and Stacey Printz contribute choreography. (Kumble Theatre, Flatbush Ave. at DeKalb Ave. 718-488-1624. June 8-9 at 8.)

PASCAL RIOULT DANCE THEATRE
To celebrate his fifteenth anniversary, Rioult premières "Symphony of Psalms," his fifth treatment of Stravinsky in as many years. Matching the music's liturgical fervor with soaring lifts and reaching arms,

the ensemble work climaxes conventionally, with intersecting diagonals of leaping dancers. "EXP #1," the title of the other première, stands for experiment, and it's a good one. Alternating between techno and Bach, and between solos, ensemble, and a duet for the troupe's finest members—Penelope Gonzalez and the rookie Marcus Jarrell Willis—the piece sets off tiny explosions in the dancers' muscles, offering the shock of the new for Rioult's fans. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. June 12 at 7:30, June 13 at 7, June 14-15 at 8, June 16 at 2 and 8, and June 17 at 2 and 7:30.)

"DANCEMOPOLITAN"
Eight former members of Stephen Petronio's company, many of them established choreographers in their own right, come to Joe's Pub for an evening of original works hosted by Petronio. Ashleigh Leite, Todd Williams, and Ellis Wood, among others, explore their favorite villains, icons, and heroines, from Wonder Woman to Bonnie and Clyde to the big man upstairs. (425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. June 14-15 at 9:30.)

"WORKS & PROCESS"
In its final event of the season, the exceptional demonstration-and-discussion series explores the limits of choreographic collaboration, in this case between the illusionist dance company Pilobolus (recently seen at the Academy Awards, its dancers twisting into the shape of, among other things, a stiletto) and the Israeli choreographers Inbal Pinto and Avshalom Pollak. The fruit of this collaboration, excerpts of which will be performed here by seven Pilobolus dancers—and discussed by Pinto, Pollak, and Robby Barnett, a director of Pilobolus—will première later this summer at the American Dance Festival. (Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 212-423-3587. June 18 at 7:30.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

"MET IN THE PARKS"
Peter Gelb's "new Met" may prize innovation, but it's not likely that he'll tamper much with this beloved summer series, an annual gift to the city for four decades. The first of this year's pair of operas, presented in concert, is **"La Bohème,"** with Hei-Kyung Hong (an admired Met regular, as Mimì), Mary Dunleavy, Roberto Aronica, and Dwayne Croft in the leading roles; Gareth Morrell conducts. (Great Lawn, Central Park. June 12. ♦ Pelham Bay Park, the Bronx. June 15.) ♦ Complementing the Puccini is Gounod's **"Faust,"** with Maurizio Benini, an effective leader of early-nineteenth-century fare, conducting a cast that features Katie Van Kooten, Kate Lindsey, David Pomeroy, Hung Yun, and the redoubtable James Morris (in the grand role of Méphistophélès). (Great Lawn, Central Park. June 13. ♦ Snug Harbor, Staten Island. June 16. ♦ Prospect Park, Brooklyn. June 19.) (All performances begin at 8. No tickets required. For more information, call 212-362-6000.)

AMATO OPERA: "FALSTAFF"
Anthony Amato's storied opera company, a feisty mix of professionals and amateurs, performs Verdi's big-boned comedy in its tiny, old-time venue on the Lower East Side. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-8200. June 9 and June 15-16 at 7:30 and June 10 and June 17 at 2:30.)

THE FISHER ENSEMBLE:
"THE PASSION OF ST. THOMAS MORE"
Garrett Fisher, a star of Seattle's new-music scene who has been deeply influenced by Japanese Noh theatre and Chinese opera, brings his troupe of musicians and singer-actors to the Judson Memorial Church to perform his opera based on Henry VIII's execution of the sainted Catholic humanist. (55 Washington Sq. S. June 15 at 8 and June 17 at 4. Tickets at the door.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Riccardo Muti, the elegant and formidable Italian maestro, settles in for a two-week residency. His first

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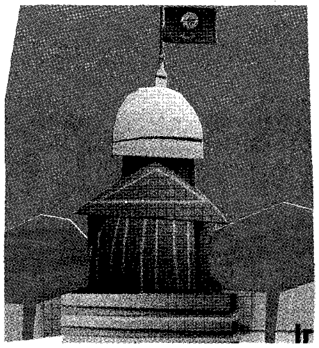
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
AFFAIRS OF STATE

The state legislature of Idaho is composed of men and women who serve for only three months a year and then go back to their jobs as ranchers, pharmacists, and teachers. As a result, they seem closer to their constituents and less susceptible to big-money interests and the seductions of party hackdom than other state senators and representatives. Frederick Wiseman's "State Legislature," to be broadcast on PBS on June 13 at 9, is a fascinating exposition of the homely workings of democracy. Through all the debates, however, a consistent conservative undertow can be felt: a largely rural state, with a largely homogeneous population of white Christians, Idaho feels itself to be an Edenic paradise of self-reliant individuals. Yet this self-mythologizing makes its representatives less proud than anxious: the social ills besetting the rest of America, and big government itself, may invade at any minute. The movie is devoted to the irony that many of the bills that are debated come to a state legislature that is wary of any legislation at all.

—*David Denby*



program features Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto (with the pianist Lang Lang), surrounded by the music of two fringe composers to whom Muti has long been committed: Cherubini (the Overture in G Major) and Hindemith (the one-act opera "Sancta Susanna," with the singers Tatiana Serjan, Brigitte Pinter, and Jane Gilbert, making their Philharmonic débuts). (June 7 and June 12 at 7:30 and June 8-9 at 8.) ♦ Rossini's overture to "Semiramide" precedes Schubert's very Rossinian Third Symphony and Dvořák's bumptious Symphony No. 5. (June 14 at 7:30 and June 16 at 8.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

NEW AMSTERDAM SINGERS: "FLIGHTS OF SONG"
Works by three important British composers—Britten ("Hymn to St. Cecilia," a setting of the Auden poem), Vaughan Williams, and Howard Skempton (a première)—highlight Clara Longstreth's typically adventurous concert with her excellent avocational group, which also features pieces by Peter Warlock, Stephen Sametz, and Richard Wilson ("In Schrafft's"). (Church of the Holy Trinity, 316 E. 88th St. 212-842-1511. June 7 at 8.)

"NEW PATHS IN MUSIC" SERIES: "A MEDITERRANEAN FESTIVAL"
David Alan Miller, the longtime music director of the Albany Symphony, leads his chamber orchestra in works by contemporary composers from Spain (Gabriel Erkoreka and David del Puerto), Italy (Francesco Antonioni and Filippo Del Corno), and Greece (Kostis Kritsotakis and Panagiotis Liaropoulos) rarely heard on these shores, with the oboist Robert Ingliss and the clarinettist Alan Kay as soloists. The mini-festival begins in the afternoon with a performance by Kay, the pianist Stephen Gosling, and the Cassatt String Quartet. (St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 346 W. 20th St. June 9 at 4 and 8. To purchase tickets, visit www.newpathsinmusic.org.)

"MUSIC FORWARD" SERIES: CHRISTINA COURTIN AND THE KNIGHTS
The eclectic and exciting young vocalist joins the intrepid Brooklyn chamber orchestra for a concert that features a set fronted by Courtin and her band (the Running Kicks) as well as a performance of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. (Brooklyn Lyceum, 227 Fourth Ave. June 9 at 8. To purchase tickets, visit www.brooklynlyceum.com.)

PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA OF THE AMERICAS
The recently formed orchestra, led by the assured young Mexican conductor Alondra de la Parra, promises an evening of equal parts grace and energy: a program featuring works by Gershwin ("Cuban Overture"), Ginastera (the Suite from the ballet "Estancia"), Revueltas ("Sensemayá"), the young Mexican composer Martin Capella (the world première of "Ixbalanqué"), and—the true highlight—two works by Paquito D'Rivera ("Fantasías Messiaenicas" and "Memories-Danzón"), with the renowned saxophonist and clarinettist as soloist. (Rose Hall, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. June 12 at 7.)

RECITALS

COSMOPOLITAN CHAMBER PLAYERS
Eric Grossman, the group's longtime violinist, pairs up with the pianist Gleb Ivanov (the first-prize winner of the 2005 Young Concert Artists International Auditions) to perform sonatas for violin and piano by Beethoven (No. 8 in G Major) and Franck along with music by Schubert, Tchaikovsky, and Ysaÿe. (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. June 6 at 7:30. Tickets at the door.)

BARGEMUSIC
Some highlights from two weeks at the floating chamber-music series, busier than ever. June 6 and June 8 at 8: The estimable pianist Dmitry Alexeev offers a recital of works by Beethoven (the Sonatas Nos. 5 and 32, both in C minor) and Chopin (including the Barcarolle, Op. 60, and the Polonaise in A-Flat Major, Op. 53). ♦ June 7 at 8: The first-ever Jazz Night on the Barge is an evening with the legendary jazz pianist (and Woody Allen fixture) Dick Hyman. ♦ June 13 at 8 and June 17 at 4: More Beethoven—the Sonata for Horn and Piano and the Septet in E-Flat Major—from a young crew that includes the hornist Mike Adkinson, the violinist Jonathan Gandelsman, and the violist Nicholas Cords. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083. For full listing, see www.bargemusic.org.)

DA CAPO CHAMBER PLAYERS
The expert ensemble, which has devoted itself to new American music for more than three decades, concludes its season with a diverse program of downtown-oriented pieces by David Lang, Randall Woolf, Jefferson Friedman, and Jacob TV ("Grab It!"), among others, at the Knitting Factory. (74 Leonard St. 212-219-3055. June 7-8 at 7:30.)

EMERSON STRING QUARTET
Stunning new string quartets seem to arrive on the scene every year, but this longtime American foursome still rules the roost. They close the Carnegie Hall season with a round of "Perspectives" concerts, with the quartets of Beethoven at their core. All performances are at 8. June 7: The second of Beethoven's "Razumovsky" Quartets (in E Minor) is preceded by works by Brahms and Ives (the Quartet No. 2). ♦ June 10: Two of the Master's evocative "middle quartets"—the "Harp," Op. 74, and the "Serioso," Op. 95—form the middle of a concert that begins with music by Webern and concludes with Bartók's Quartet No. 3. ♦ June 12: The grand Quartets in E-Flat Major, Op. 127, and in A Minor, Op. 132, surround Wolfgang Rihm's Quartet No. 4. ♦ June 14: The next concert strides across history, beginning with six selections from Bach's "Art of Fugue" and continuing with Shostakovich's pitch-black Quartet No. 15 in E-Flat Minor and Beethoven's towering Quartet in B-Flat Major, Op. 130 (with the "Grosse Fuge"). ♦ June 17: For the finale, the group offers the world première of Kaija Saariaho's "Terra Memoria" in between the Quartet in F Major, Op. 135, and the supreme masterwork of the repertory, the Quartet in C-Sharp Minor, Op. 131. (212-247-7800. For a full listing of preview concerts, see www.carnegiehall.org.)

MANNES BEETHOVEN INSTITUTE
The New School's musical division offers a busy schedule of summer concerts, beginning with its annual tribute to Beethoven. For the final event, the Brentano String Quartet will join the pianists Claude Frank and Thomas Sauer, among other musicians, to perform a program featuring the Piano Sonata in E Major, Op. 109, and the Quartet in E-Flat Major, Op. 127. (Mannes Concert Hall, 150 W. 85th St. June 8 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

THE WESTERN WIND
The enterprising chamber choir has chosen a stylish venue, the Paula Cooper gallery, for its next concert, which features a world première from Meredith Monk ("Basket Rondo") and a collaborative work by Tania León and Michel Camilo ("Batéy Suite") along with pieces by Bolcom, Salzman, and Glass. (534 W. 21st St. 212-873-2848. June 8 at 8.)

LOCRIAN CHAMBER PLAYERS
This ensemble keeps the "new" in new music by performing works that are less than a decade old. Pieces by two major composers, the Estonian minimalist Arvo Pärt (the Passacaglia for Violin and Piano) and the American radical Alvin Curran, highlight its next concert, which also features music by Suzanne Farrin and Mike Winter. (Riverside Church, 10th fl., Riverside Dr. at 120th St. June 9 at 8. No tickets required.)

ANTHONY DE MARE
In the last concert of a series crafted in response to the Rubin Museum of Art's exhibition in tribute to the Dalai Lama, the contemporary-music champion performs the world première of James Mobberley's "Missing Peace" (adding Tibetan chant to his piano performance), works by Bruce Stark, Laurie Anderson, and Anthony Davis, and classic pieces by Bach, Debussy, and Scelsi. (150 W. 17th St. 212-620-5000, ext. 344. June 13 at 7.)

OUT OF TOWN

NORFOLK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
The Yale School of Music's summer outpost, beloved for its patrician atmosphere and its intimate, dark-wood Music Shed, combines respect for tradition with the forging of new paths. The

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season begins with a new-music workshop concert centering on pieces for guitar and theremin, the spooky space-age instrument that has graced many a Hollywood score; Benjamin Verdery, the head of Yale's guitar department, and Elizabeth Brown are the featured soloists. (Norfolk, Conn. 860-542-3000. June 16 at 8.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN
This long-established summer festival presents all sorts of concerts, but its heart and soul are to be found in its devotion to the art of the string quartet, with performances taking place in Gordon Hall, an air-conditioned, whitewashed shoebox design with clear and firm acoustics. The season opens with a benefit concert featuring a program of music by Shostakovich, Beethoven, and Brahms (that summer mainstay, the Piano Quintet), performed by the pianist Peter Serkin and the Bard Festival String Quartet. (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. June 17 at 3.)

POP NOTES
BACK-SEAT BETTY

If you were to draw a diagram of funk music in the early seventies, Betty Davis would be dead center. Born Betty Mabry, she was married to Miles Davis long enough to turn him on to funk-rock, was acquainted with both Jimi Hendrix and Sly Stone, and was just as freaky as George Clinton. In 1973, after years as a scenester and model, she cut a self-titled début album with members of the Family Stone. A second album followed a year later. **"Betty Davis"** and **"They Say I'm Different,"** newly rereleased by the Seattle-based independent label Light in the Attic, document their time and serve as a measure of how far music has come since then. Not very far, as it turns out.

Other funk stars wrote political anthems, charted a more personal course, or—in the case of great artists like Sly Stone and Curtis Mayfield—did both. Davis's purview was narrower. For the most part, she dealt frontally with sex; she was, as the title of a later album would have it, a Nasty Gal. Though "Betty Davis" is heavier on guitars and "They Say I'm Different" heavier on keyboards, the two are very much of a piece. Davis's rough and dirty vocals are perfectly suited to the rough and dirty funk, not to mention subjects like casual sex ("If I'm in Luck I Might Get Picked Up"), S & M ("He Was a Big Freak"), and hustling ("Don't Call Her No Tramp"). "Shoo-B-Doop and Cop Him," from the second record, is a definitive statement of libidinal bravado: over a reptilian guitar line, Davis meets a man and decides she's going to "do it 'till the cows come home" and "move it slow like a mule." "When my goose gets loose," she sings, "he's gonna know." Old MacDonald never had a farm like that. While there may be raunchier women in the history of American music (Lucille Bogan? Millie Jackson? Lil' Kim?), there may not be. Davis's other great subject is her own rightful place among musical pioneers; on the title track of "They Say I'm Different," she name-checks giants of blues and early rock, a trick she would later update to great effect on "F.U.N.K.," from "Nasty Gal." Light in the Attic's rereleases are lovingly packaged and lavishly annotated, with fine liner notes by the blogger and scholar Oliver Wang and previously unreleased songs, including the carnivorous "Come Take Me" and the sleepily sexy "I Will Take That Ride," in which Davis asks the immortal, Funkadelic-style question "Is it true that you want to hi-ho my Silver?"

—*Ben Greenman*

MOVIES OPENING

BELLE TOUJOURS
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening June 8. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

BEYOND HATRED
A documentary by Olivier Meyrou, about a gay man in France who was murdered by skinheads and his family's quest for insight into his killers' motives. Opening June 15. (Cinema Village.)

CHALK
A mockumentary about the life of a high-school teacher. Directed by Mike Akel. Opening June 8. (Sunshine Cinema.)

CZECH DREAM
In this comic documentary, Filip Remunda and Vít Klusák film their own attempts to promote a nonexistent superstore in the Czech Republic. Opening June 15. (IFC Center.)

EAGLE VS. SHARK
A comedy from New Zealand about two misfits in search of love. Directed by Taika Waititi. Opening June 15. (Sunshine Cinema.)

FANTASTIC FOUR: RISE OF THE SILVER SURFER
Tim Story directed this sequel, starring Ioan Gruffudd, Jessica Alba, Chris Evans, Michael Chiklis, and Doug Jones. Opening June 15. (In wide release.)

FIDO
A horror comedy, directed by Andrew Currie, about a boy who has a zombie for a pet. Opening June 15. (In limited release.)

GYPSY CARAVAN
A documentary by Jasmine Dellal, about the music of the Roma. Opening June 15. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

HOSTEL: PART II
Eli Roth directed this horror sequel, about three American college students who check into the wrong hostel in Slovakia. Opening June 8. (In wide release.)

LIGHTS IN THE DUSK
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening June 13. (IFC Center.)

NANCY DREW
Emma Roberts stars as the girl detective; Andrew Fleming directed. Opening June 15. (In wide release.)

OCEAN'S THIRTEEN
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening June 8. (In wide release.)

PIERREPOINT
Adrian Shergold directed this bio-pic, about the last hangman of Great Britain. Starring Eddie Marsan and Juliet Stevenson. Opening June 8. (IFC Center.)

STRIKE
Volker Schlöndorff directed this historical drama, about the female shipyard welder who sparked the strike that gave rise to the Solidarity movement in Poland. Starring Katharina Thalbach. In Polish. Opening June 15. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

SURF'S UP
An animated mockumentary about a surfing competition for penguins. With the voices of Shia LaBeouf, Jon Heder, Zooey Deschanel, and James Woods. Directed by Ash Brannon and Chris Buck. Opening June 8. (In wide release.)

12:08 EAST OF BUCHAREST
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening June 6. (Film Forum.)

UNBORN IN THE U.S.A.
A documentary, directed by Stephen Fell and Will Thompson, about the anti-abortion movement. Opening June 15. (Cinema Village.)

LA VIE EN ROSE
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening June 8. (In limited release.)

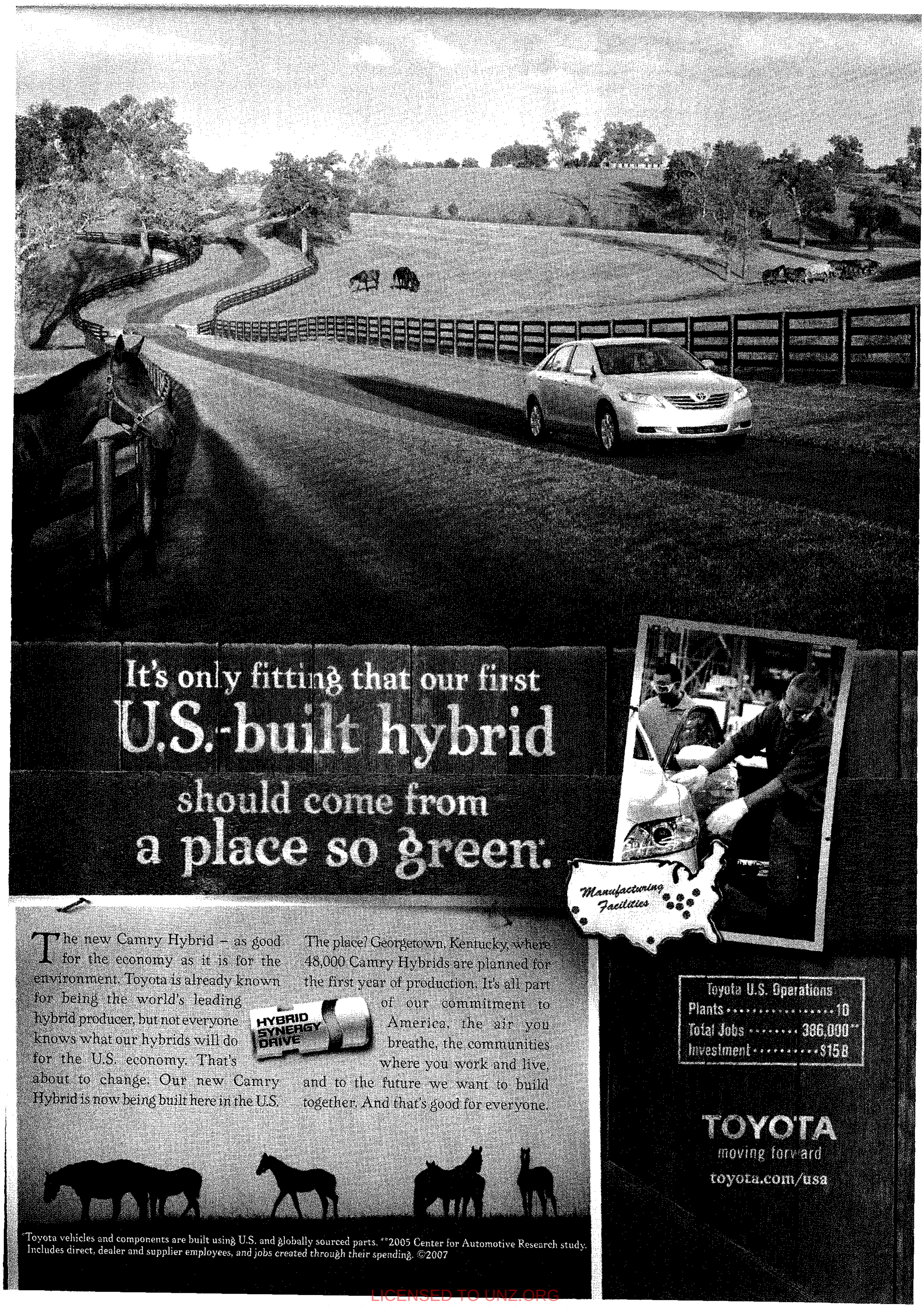
NOW PLAYING

ANGEL-A
This is what happens when a Frenchman (Luc Besson) makes a film along the lines of "It's a Wonderful Life": the small-town atmosphere becomes Paris, the staid black-and-white photography looks like diamonds on black velvet, and the old guardian angel, Clarence, becomes a leggy, mini-skirted siren (Rie Rasmussen). In Besson's version, a debt-ridden criminal (Jamel Debbouze), chased by thugs, considers suicide by jumping into the Seine, but he meets a despairing angel and together they decide to work on each other's problems. The film is part comic fable, part kick-ass gangster drama. The overripe dialogue and earnest performances give this sugary cocktail some real fizz. In French.—*Bruce Diones* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

AWAY FROM HER
Julie Christie is sixty-six, but her face hasn't lost its beautiful definition—the downward-turning mouth, the slightly pointed chin, the eyes that can explode with wrath. Her temperament hasn't fallen out of shape, either. As Fiona, an Ontario woman succumbing to Alzheimer's, she seems quite lost one second but then, as an intention pierces through a cloud of unhappiness, becomes crisp and incisive. Christie, turning a medical condition into a dramatic coup, makes it impossible for us merely to feel sorry for Fiona, and that toughness gives the film the abrupt, challenging intelligence of a fresh and exploratory work rather than the soft piteousness of, say, a "Movie of the Week" from 1973. With Gordon Pinsent, the veteran Canadian actor, who has a capacious gut, a fine beard, and the burnished aspect of an aging lion, as Grant, Fiona's longtime husband; Michael Murphy as the stricken man whom Fiona falls in love with at an assisted-living facility; and Olympia Dukakis as the practical old broad who gives Grant a way to remain loyal yet survive as a man. The young Canadian actress Sarah Polley adapted the Alice Munro story "The Bear Came Over the Mountain" and also directed the movie, with attention to the human mysteries and a feeling for the spiritual meaning of landscape. In all, a minor triumph.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 5/14/07.) (In wide release.)

BELLE TOUJOURS
In this luminous drama, the ninety-seven-year-old director Manoel de Oliveira updates the characters brought to the screen by Luis Buñuel in his classic from 1967, "Belle de Jour." A solitary old man, Henri Husson (Michel Piccoli, reprising his role from the earlier film), glimpses and follows an elderly yet stunning platinum-blond woman, Séverine Serizy (Bulle Ogier, taking over for Catherine Deneuve). Though they haven't seen each other in forty years, they have been silently bound together by a perverse liaison—Henri, Séverine's husband's best friend, had found her working in an upscale brothel and never let on whether or not he had told her husband. Their reunion is the pretext for an extraordinarily graceful, good-humored, and subtly heartbreaking reflection on last chances. Through Henri, Oliveira savors the joys of life in loving and intimate detail—a Dvořák symphony, the streets of Paris, a glass of whiskey, a barstool confession, a woman's beauty—as if each risked being the last. Oliveira has no time for the trivial; each image of this sixty-eight-minute bijou is lucid, precise, and essential. The concluding farewell is as refined a rage against the dying of the light as the cinema has yet offered. In French.—*Richard Brody* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

CRAZY LOVE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In limited release.)



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Total Jobs	386,000**
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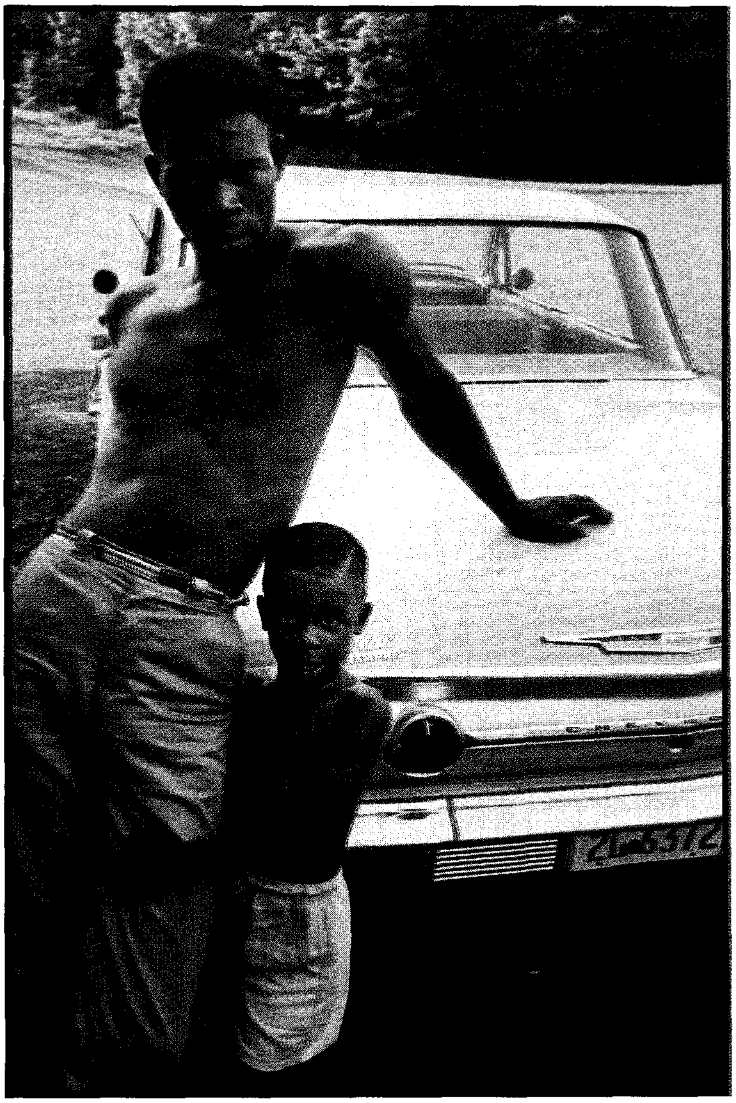
DAISY KENYON
From the first scene, when Dana Andrews haggles with a New York cabdriver and then waits to be buzzed into a walkup building, Otto Preminger builds his sombre yet frenetic 1947 melodrama from the stuff of life. Daisy Kenyon (a tightly restrained Joan Crawford), a successful fashion illustrator, is in love with Dan O'Mara (Andrews), a domineering, street-smart corporate lawyer who happens to be married. Suffering the eternal fate of the other woman, with stolen moments and broken dates, she starts to see Peter Lapham (Henry Fonda), a naval architect, twice-wounded war veteran, and depressed widower she finds "unstable." Peter wants to marry her at once, but Dan doesn't give up so easily; caught between the two, the tough, worldly Daisy begins to fall apart. Jolting behavioral touches—hard stares and startled retreats, sudden kisses, blows, and tears—thrust the action into the realm of mental disturbance. As Dan's marriage breaks up and moves to the tabloid scandal of divorce court, the triangle builds to a fearsome pitch of emotional conflict and psychic crisis. Rarely have love and madness seemed so fruitfully allied.—*R.B.* (MOMA; June 9 and June 18.)

FAY GRIM
Nine years after "Henry Fool," Hal Hartley delivers a curious sequel. The disreputable Henry (Thomas Jay Ryan) has gone missing; he is either dead or in Europe, if you consider that a choice. Simon Grim (James Urbaniak), the garbage-man poet of Woodside, Queens, is in prison, despite his Nobel Prize, while his ditzy sister, Fay (Parker Posey), struggles to raise her difficult teenage son (Liam Aiken). The stalemate is broken when a C.I.A. man (Jeff Goldblum, the best thing in the movie) declares an interest in Henry's private notebooks, thus triggering a quest that will suck in Simon's publisher (Chuck Montgomery), a beautiful Israeli spy (Saffron Burrows), and other interested parties. Fay travels to Paris and thence to Istanbul, but with every step the story loses power, as we come to realize that Hartley, the laureate of dysfunctional suburbia, is unwisely broadening his horizons. He even seems to believe his own MacGuffin, and the result is a half-hearted and implausible thriller; would Henry, a devout littérateur, really find himself on the fringes of Islamic jihad?—*Anthony Lane* (5/21/07) (In wide release.)

KNOCKED UP
Ben Stone (Seth Rogen) is a feckless oaf with a wide grin, a bong, and four lazy housemates who are too old to be boys but will never, unless fate takes a hand, bother to grow into men. Fate, however, has plans for Ben, who drunkenly sleeps with a bright, ambitious woman named Alison (Katherine Heigl) and gets her pregnant. If you can accept the premise of Judd Apatow's movie—that Alison would not just keep the baby but ask Ben to become a proper father, with his share of responsibilities—then there is much to relish here. As in Apatow's last picture, "The 40 Year Old Virgin," the cream of the gags go to supporting players; characters like Alison's unhappy sister (Leslie Mann) or the spiteful colleague (Kristen Wiig) at the TV studio where she works land the sharpest blows. Much of the movie, indeed, slides from the easy laugh to the painful wince; even if you tire of Apatow's vomit jokes, or his second-aged weakness for smut, there are flashes of disarming honesty here from which more earnest films might shy away.—*A.L.* (6/4/07) (In wide release.)

LIGHTS IN THE DUSK
The pleasures and paradoxes of the Finnish director Aki Kaurismäki's method are richly revealed in his brief, brisk, yet dour new drama. Koistinen (Janne Hyytiäinen), a handsome young night watchman working for a high-tech security firm at a chilly, windswept modern business center, is twitted by his superiors, disdained by his colleagues, and rejected by women. He is a regular guy living like a pariah until he is befriended by a stylish blonde (Maria Järvenhelmi) who promises romance but uses him as the fall guy for a robbery. As things go from bad to worse for Koistinen, whose every dream is thwarted, Kaurismäki effects a subtle twist: surrounded by characters ranging from the oddball to the grotesque, Koistinen, God's outcast, turns into Everyman. Filmed with a crisp, minimalist technique, Kaurismäki's dry, deadpan depiction of a world with no future is a squeaky-clean Nordic visual translation of punk. In Finnish and Russian.—*R.B.* (IFC Center.)



Civil-rights-era photographs by Bruce Davidson are at Aperture.

MR. BROOKS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

ONCE
In John Carney's amiable folk-pop musical meditation on the male musician's ego, the talented Glen Hansard (of the Irish band the Frames) stars as Guy, a vacuum-cleaner repairman who performs his songs on the streets of Dublin. Markéta Irglová shines in a nuanced performance as a Czech émigré who recognizes Guy's spirit and inspires him with her own musical artistry. It doesn't get much sweeter than this, but Carney avoids cloying sentiment and renders his characters believably—and adorably—idealistic. Every time Hansard and Irglová start to play, we sit back and enjoy, and hope they succeed.—*Shauna Lyon* (In wide release.)

PAPRIKA
A dazzling example of the Japanese art of anime, set in the adult business world of long white corridors, glass walls, and research labs. It's a Freudian-Jungian-Felliniesque sci-fi thriller and an outright challenge to its American viewers, who may, in the face of its whirligig complexity, feel rather pea-brained. Paprika, the heroine, is an eighteen-year-old sprite—a kind of sexy Japanese Tinkerbell—who enters people's dreams in order to perform therapy on them. The connection between dreams and movies is worked to a fare-thee-well, but there are other levels of representation, too—Internet sites, which characters enter bodily, and a kind of collective unconscious, appearing now and then, in which a parade of toys and icons (including the Statue of Liberty) march through an enormous city with a menacing, throbbing insistence that borders on the fascistic. Directed by Satoshi Kon, who mixes drawn and digital materials, and based on a novel by the science-fiction writer Yasutaka Tsutsui. In Japanese.—*D.D.* (5/28/07) (In wide release.)

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: AT WORLD'S END
This is the third, the flimsiest, and—if there is any justice—the last in a series of adventures that began in high spirits and wound up stuck in the doldrums. Johnny Depp, his mannerisms reduced to flailing, returns as Captain Jack Sparrow, who needs to be brought back from Davy Jones's locker by Captain Barbossa (Geoffrey Rush), with the help of Elizabeth Swann (Keira Knightley) and Will Turner (Orlando Bloom), the wettest pair of lovers in maritime history. Gore Verbinski's movie mistakes confusion for complexity, piling on the double-crosses, the shifting loyalties, and the mad hallucinations for well over two and a half hours; anyone who missed the first or second installments will be left utterly at sea. Jonathan Pryce, as Elizabeth's father, has one sad and lovely scene that belongs to another movie, but few of the other performers emerge with credit; even Chow Yun-Fat, who plays a Chinese pirate leader, and whose tranquil style can usually be counted on to calm the most hectic of plots, is lured into the prevailing hamminess. Time to abandon ship.—*A.L.* (6/4/07) (In wide release.)

SHREK THE THIRD
Postmodernism for moppets, pastiche for the potty-trained. As in the first two installments of this most lucrative of animated franchises, many of the jokes are media-wise parodies—in particular, potshots at such Disney fairy-tale characters as Rapunzel and Sleeping Beauty. The "Shrek" series has been funny, but its odd way of entertaining the kids with derision before they've been ravished by awe makes one a little sick. In this movie, Shrek (Mike Myers), eager to avoid the duties of kingship in Far, Far Away, goes on a quest to find a substitute—Fiona's cousin Arthur, or Artie (Justin Timberlake), who turns out to be a student at Worcestershire Academy, a sort of medieval Burbank High in which snarky kids in jerkins smoke frankincense and myrrh. The plot isn't as strong as in the first two movies—if anything, it feels a little desperate—and Eddie Murphy and Antonio Banderas, who sparked "Shrek" and "Shrek 2," respectively, as Donkey and Puss in Boots, are not used as centrally here. But the snide Rupert Ever-

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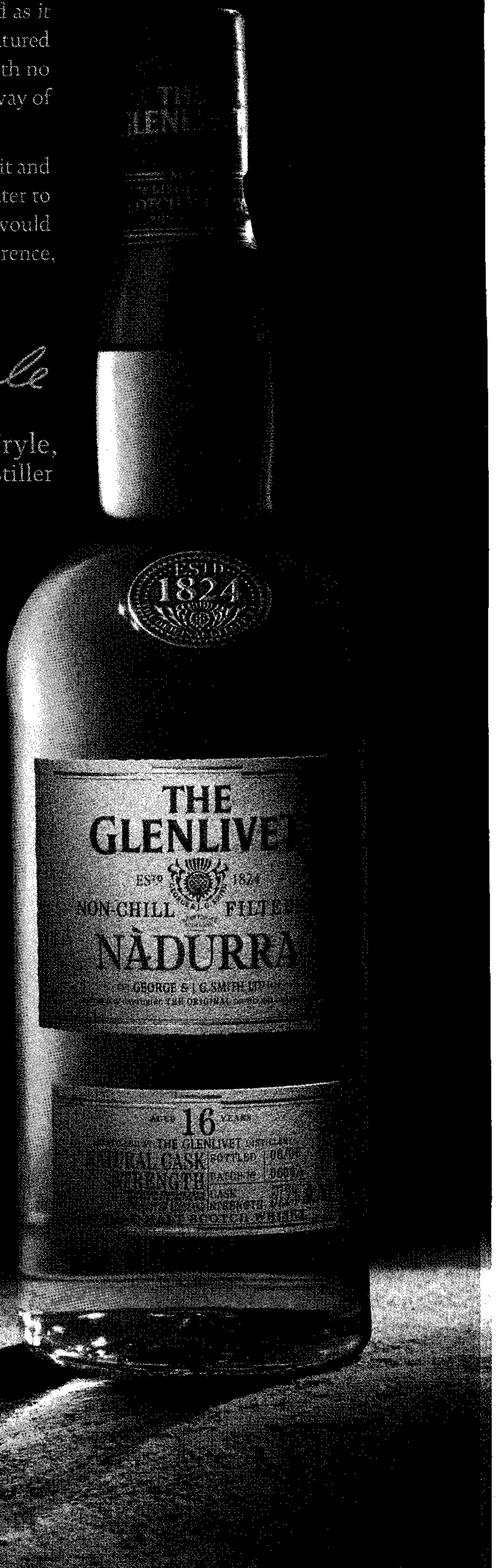
Because Nàdurra is non-chill filtered and because it's natural strength, it's nice just to smell it and have a little taste of it as it is. But I would recommend the addition of a small amount of water to pick up much more of the overall flavor of the whisky. About 1 part water to 3 parts Nàdurra would be the way that I would enjoy it. But of course, it's up to each individual. Whatever your preference, I hope you enjoy drinking The Glenlivet Nàdurra 16 Year Old as much as I did making it.

Jim Cryle

— Jim Cryle,
The Glenlivet Master Distiller



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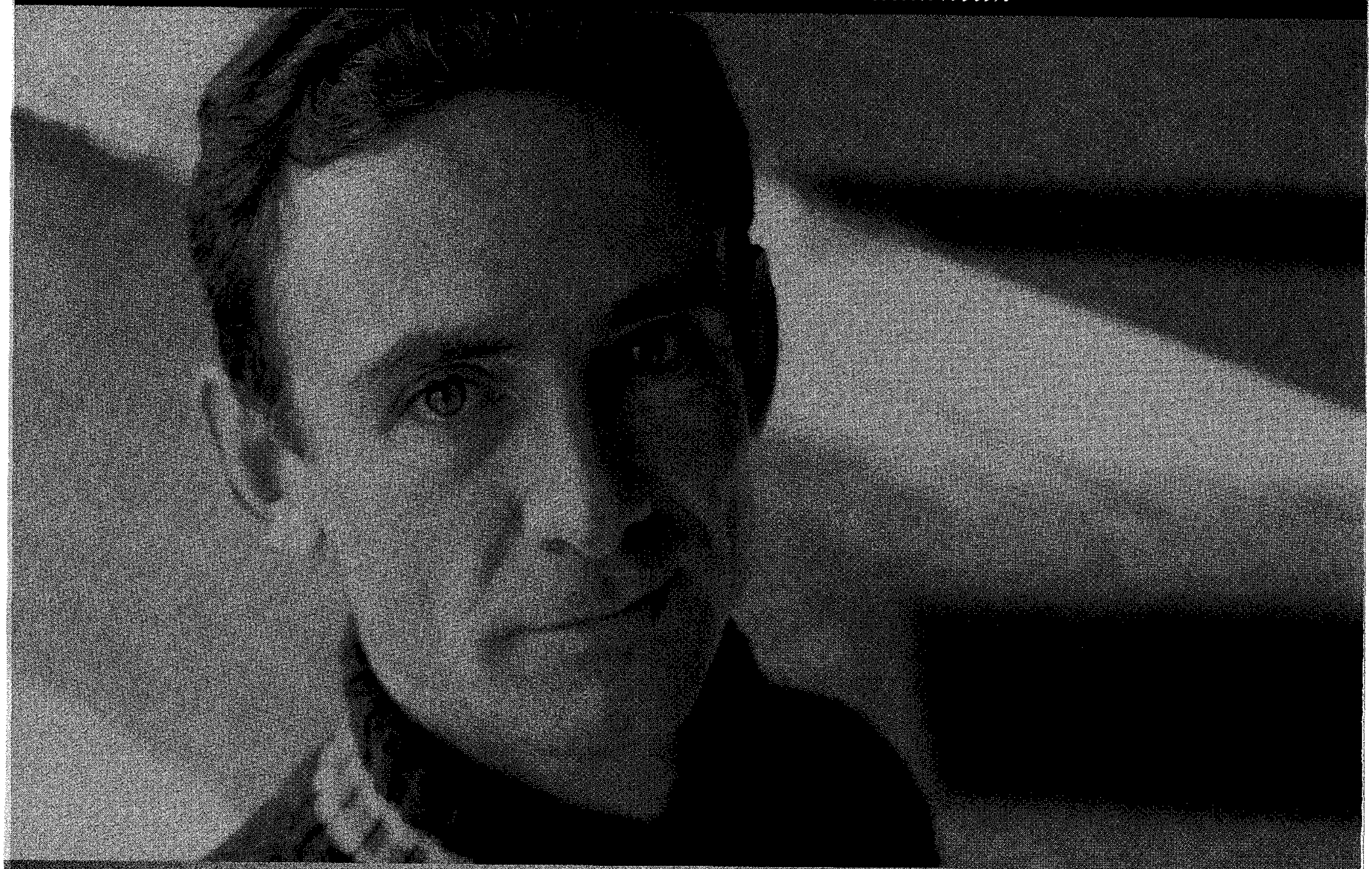
THE ORIGINATORS

AUTHOR PROVOCATEUR *Chuck Palahniuk*



TIME-BENDER AND MIND-BENDER. No longer an underground cult phenom, the novelist Chuck Palahniuk is credited with introducing new audiences to literature, thanks to his talent for spinning visceral tales shrouded in black humor. A prodigious writer, Palahniuk recently published the novel "Rant," his tenth book in as many years. At last count, three million volumes bearing his name have been sold in the United States alone.

"Rant" chronicles the life and death of Buster "Rant" Casey, a character whom Palahniuk describes as "a reinvention of an American archetype like Tom Sawyer, Huck Finn, or Tom Joad." Casey's story as the "Kissing Killer" moves from a small town to the big city in a series of overlapping and sometimes contradictory reminiscences, is told as oral history. The format "allows me to cut and intercut a lot of different stories the way you would edit film," explains Palahniuk. "Audiences are so sophisticated now. They're not looking for a nineteenth-century form of novel. They're looking for something that can move at a good clip."

Like his character, Palahniuk considers himself a "nighttimer," someone who "takes responsibility for generating his own culture." Palahniuk shrugs off charges that his works are nihilistic. Instead, he sees himself as a romantic—that is to say, one who "abandons the safety of isolation and chooses to bond with the community or another individual and gives up some of his personal power to be with that other person."

One group Palahniuk doesn't cede personal power to is critics: "They get you really high or really down and neither is the reason I write." Although he hasn't slowed down for a decade, Palahniuk, whose next book comes out in 2008, nonetheless finds time to enjoy a good scotch on a Friday night. The Glenlivet, the single malt that started it all, salutes Chuck Palahniuk, a fellow Originator.

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ett is quite splendid as the arch-loser, Prince Charming. Dreamworks' "three-dimensional" animation makes the characters look like rubber bathtub toys. Directed by Chris Miller.—*D.D.* (5/28/07) (In wide release.)

SPIDER-MAN 3

The third and least of the series so far. Tobey Maguire, looking ever more costive and uncomfortable, returns as Peter Parker, who finds himself doubly transformed—first, into the crime-busting arachnid whom we know and revere, and, second, into a black-suited alternative who revels in violence and, for some unknown reason, keeps breaking into dance moves. He is paired with a distracted Mary Jane (Kirsten Dunst) and, briefly and more entertainingly, with Gwen Stacy (Bryce Dallas Howard), who looks like a villain waiting to happen. For the moment, we have to make do with a couple of dullards: the New Goblin (James Franco), warmed up from the previous films, and Venom (Topher Grace), a frustrated hack consumed by an extraterrestrial compound. All this is orchestrated by the director, Sam Raimi, with a halting, scattershot approach that verges on panic. The only person to emerge from the wreckage with any credit is Thomas Haden Church, who finds a grainy, melancholic streak in the unstoppable Sandman.—*A.L.* (5/7/07) (In wide release.)

STREET OF SHAME

The shrill atonal music over the opening credits of Kenji Mizoguchi's final film, from 1956, suggests the harsh view of modern life that follows. The drama is centered around Dreamland, a Tokyo brothel where the prostitutes cling to their dreams. One wants to move in with the grown son she raised with her wages, another wants to marry her steady john, a third is trying to make a proper home for her unemployed husband and their newborn, and a fourth wants to fleece enough clients to buy a respectable business. Only a newcomer, Michiko (the great Machiko Kyo), known as Mickey and thoroughly Westernized (having been kept by a G.I. during the postwar occupation), keeps a clear and cynical view of the desperate lot of these women and of all Japanese women. With a quasi-Brechtian ferocity, Mizoguchi likens marriage to free prostitution with a lot of housework thrown in, views capitalism as an official form of whoring, and sardonically sees the red-light district as the corrupt government's substitute for proper social programs. For his last film, he flattens and sharpens his style to confront a coarsened world in which his earlier lyricism has little place. In Japanese.—*R.B.* (IFC Center; June 8-10.)

12:08 EAST OF BUCHAREST

This wise and gentle comedy of political realism, by the Romanian director Corneliu Porumboiu, concerns a local television talk show in a provincial city. The rumpled host invites a pair of acquaintances—a henpecked, hard-drinking schoolteacher and an impish, insightful retiree—to join him for a live discussion about the town's response to the abdication of the dictator Ceauşescu, on December 22, 1989. This centerpiece is preceded by a mosaic of brief scenes that suggest the earnest whimsy of daily life—the teacher's constant borrowing of money and frustration with his students, the philandering broadcaster's problems with his young girlfriend. Once on the air, however, the questions turn serious, as a chillingly aggressive former member of the once-feared Securitate secret police force calls in. But, even then, Porumboiu keeps his perspective: calm but not impassive, skeptical but not cynical, he reinforces the air of normalcy and essential fearlessness that characterizes life since the fall of the tyrant. The film ends with a magnificent metaphor for serene enlightenment—and a jolting one for the faith that, he suggests, accompanies it. In Romanian.—*R.B.* (Film Forum.)

THE UMBRELLAS OF CHERBOURG

Jacques Demy's musical romance about first love and adult love is the rare movie that fully honors both. Everyone probably remembers something about "Umbrellas": that the dialogue is sung; or that its songs became international hits (one under the title "I Will Wait for You"); or that Catherine Deneuve and Nino Castelnuovo, as the salesgirl in her widowed mother's umbrella shop and the garage mechanic who lives with his aged aunt, are a surpassingly graceful couple. The mother (Anne Vernon) is also a wonderful character, worldly wise yet not sour; and after Castelnuovo is called up for service in Algeria, the globe-trotting Parisian who courts Deneuve turns out to be a hell of a guy, just as the gal Castelnuovo catches on the rebound becomes his rock of sanity. Demy uses his exquisite camera movements to follow the flux of characters who burst with ardor. In French.—*Michael Sragow* (Rubin Museum of Art; June 15.)

LA VIE EN ROSE

This ambitious French bio-pic devoted to the great Edith Piaf is fascinating, exhausting, and overwrought—a death trip. Born in 1915, Piaf (Marion Cotillard) was raised in a brothel, a travelling circus, and the bars and streets of Paris, where she developed the voice—somehow both metallic and throaty, coarse and soulful—that electrified the French and, after the war, the Americans, too. Cotillard gives an amazing performance: frail and, at times, bent (Piaf suffered from arthritis), she can look terrified and vicious simultaneously, and she goes all the way with the writer-director Olivier Dahan's concept, which emphasizes Piaf's suffering as a child and young woman and her monstrousness as an adult. The actual Piaf, who helped Charles Aznavour and Yves Montand when they were young, was generous to the talented; this Piaf is abominably self-centered and often cruel, always alcoholic and frequently drug-addicted. The movie is a remorselessly downbeat version of a gin-and-tears Hollywood bio-pic. With Gerard Depardieu as Piaf's first great patron, Sylvie Testud as a constant friend, Pascal Greggory as her adoring but often abused manager, and the handsome and polite Jean-Pierre Martins as the great love of Piaf's life, the middleweight boxing champion Marcel Cerdan. In French.—*D.D.* (In limited release.)

WAITRESS

Adrienne Shelly wrote and directed this winning comedy (sadly, her last), starring Keri Russell as Jenna, a small-town waitress and expert pie baker married to a freakishly controlling husband (Jeremy Sisto). When, to Jenna's dismay, she gets pregnant, she drowns her sorrows by baking inventive desserts with names like Bad Baby Pie and begins a torrid affair with her handsome, bland gynecologist (Nathan Fillion). The able supporting cast includes Andy Griffith (as the curmudgeonly diner owner), Cheryl Hines and Shelly (as Jenna's sparky waitress friends), and Eddie Jemison (as a nerdy suitor), and Russell conveys Jenna's bleak world with a pretty, expressionless face. Shelly deftly achieves a tone pitched between fantasy and reality, its levity belying an astute and humane study of an unhappy relationship steeped in inertia.—*S.L.* (In wide release.)

THE WENDELL BAKER STORY

What is the collective noun for the Wilson brothers? A relaxation of Wilsons? They're all here, clubbing together to create so blatant a throwback to the nineteen-seventies that any viewer not wearing a floral shirt may be refused entry to the screening. Directed by Luke and Andrew Wilson, the movie stars Luke as Wendell Baker, a groundless optimist from Texas, who has an unsteady girlfriend (Eva Mendes), a dog, and not much else. After a spell in jail, he goes to work at a retirement home, where the head nurse (Owen Wilson) is making life hell for some of the crusty customers (Harry Dean Stanton, Seymour Cassel, and Kris Kristofferson) and thus asking for revenge. The film is lazy, loose, inoffensive, shot through with occasional sadness, and all but ruined by an ending of spectacular wrongness. Will Ferrell punctures the mood with a cameo of surprising comic ferocity.—*A.L.* (5/21/07) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

BRAND UPON THE BRAIN!: In wide release. **GRACIE:** In wide release. **HOLLYWOOD DREAMS:** Cinemas 1, 2, and 3 and Quad Cinema. **PARIS, JE T'AIME:** In wide release.

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ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—"New-Filmmakers Presents." June 6 at 7: "Invisible" (2005, Konstantin Bojanov). ♦ June 6 at 8:30: "Red Molly" (2005, Tina Cena Ward). ♦ June 13 at 8: "330.20" (2006, Joey Huertas) and "Welcome to Earth" (2005, Michael Mongillo). ♦ In première. June 6-8 at 7 and 9:30 and June 9-10 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Fifth Empire" (2004, Manoel de Oliveira; in Portuguese). ♦ June 15-21 at 6:30: "13 Lakes" (2004, James Benning). ♦ June 15-21 at 9:15: "Ten Skies" (2004, Benning). ♦ June 16-17 at 4: "One Way Boogie Woogie/27 Years Later" (2005, Benning). ♦ "Avant-Garde Features." June 8 at 8: "Unstrap Me" (1968, George Kuchar). ♦ "Essential Cinema." June 9 at 5:30: "Rapt" (1934, Dimitri Kirsanoff; in French, no subtitles). ♦ June 9: Short films by Peter Kubelka, including "Pause" (1977). ♦ June 10 at 5:30: Short silent films, including "Anemic Cinema" (1926, Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray). ♦ June 10 at 7:30: Short films by George Landow, a.k.a. Owen Land (1961-73). ♦ Films by Lindsay Anderson. June 13 at 6:30, June 15 at 9:30, June 16 at 2:30, and June 17 at 8: "If . . ." (1968). ♦ June 13 at 9, June 14-15 at 6, June 16 at 5:30, and June 17 at 2: "O Lucky Man!" (1973). ♦ June 14 at 9:30, June 16 at 9, and June 17 at 5:30: "Britannia Hospital" (1982). ♦ "Goethe-Institut New York Presents." June 14 at 7:30: "Film Before Film" (1986, Werner Nekes). ♦ Special screening. June 19 at 7:30: "From the Other Side" (2002, Chantal Akerman; in French, English, and Spanish).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—Films from the Sundance Institute. June 6 at 6:40 and 10: "X: The Unheard Music" (1985, W. T. Morgan), with a free performance by John Doe at 9 P.M. for ticket holders. ♦ June 6 at 9:40 and June 9 at 6:30: "Manda Bala" (2006, Jason Kohn; in Portuguese). ♦ June 7 at 6:40 and June 9 at midnight: "Chasing Ghosts" (2006, Lincoln Ruchti). ♦ June 7 at 9:40, June 8 at midnight, and June 10 at 3: "On the Road with Judas" (2005, JJ Lask). ♦ June 8 at 6: "Rocket Science" (2006, Jeffrey Blitz). ♦ June 9 at noon: "Nerakhoun: The Centre Will Not Hold" (2007, Ellen Kuras). ♦ June 9 at 3:45: "Banished" (2006, Marco Williams). ♦ June 9 at 9:15: "Padre Nuestro" (2006, Christopher Zalla; in Spanish and English). ♦ June 10 at 6: "The Unforeseen" (2007, Laura Dunn). ♦ Special screenings. June 11 at 6:50 and 9:15: Three short films by Chris Marker, including "The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Singer" (1974; in French). ♦ June 12 at 7: "Terror Island" (1920, James Cruze; silent). ♦ June 13 at 7 and 9:15 and June 14 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Breathless" (1959, Jean-Luc Godard; in French). ♦ June 15-17 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15 and June 18-19 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Pierrot le Fou" (1965, Godard; in French).

BROOKLYN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
Cobble Hill Cinema, 265 Court St., Brooklyn (718-388-4306)—For complete program information, visit www.wbff.org. June 7 at 6: "Slippery Slope" (2006, Sarah Schenck). ♦ June 7 at 9:30 and June 9 at 6: "Have You Another Apple?" (2007, Bayram Fazli; in Farsi). ♦ June 9 at 7: "The Elephant King" (2006, Seth Grossman).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. June 6-7 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, and 9:40: "Mafioso" (1962, Alberto Lattuada; in Italian). ♦ June 8-28 at 1, 2, 3:30, 4:30, 6, 7, 8:30, and 9:30: "Let's Get Lost" (1988, Bruce Weber). ♦ Documentaries by Werner Herzog. June 6-7 at 1:40, 5:30, and 9:20: "Grizzly Man" (2005). ♦ June 6-7 at 3:40 and 7:30: "My Best Fiend" (1999).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE
Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through July 31: The films of René Clair. June 12 at 12:30, 4, and 7:30: "The Italian Straw Hat" (1928; silent) and "Paris Qui Dort" (1925, silent). ♦ June 19 at 12:30, 4, and 7:30: "À Nous la Liberté" (1931; in French).

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—In revival. June 8-10 at noon: "Street of Shame" (†). ♦ June 15-17 at noon: "There Was a Father" (1942, Yasujiro Ozu; in Japanese). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." June 8-9: "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" (1975, Jim Sharman). ♦ June 15-16: "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" (television series) sing-along.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"To Save and Project." June 6-9 at 6:15: "Chelsea Girls" (1966, Andy Warhol). ♦ June 6 at 8: "The Spy in Black" (1939, Michael Powell). ♦ June 7 at 6:15: "The End of the World" (1916, August Blom; silent). ♦ June 7 at 8:15 and June 17 at 3: "The Thing from Another World" (1951, Christian Nyby). ♦ June 8 at 6 and June 14 at 8:45: "The Hero" (1966, Satyajit Ray; in Bengali). ♦ June 9 at 2 and June 14 at 6: "La Fille de l'Eau" (1925, Jean Renoir; silent) and "Isabelle aux Dombes" (1951, Maurice Pialat; silent). ♦ June 9 at 4:15 and June 18 at 8:15: "Daisy Kenyon" (†). ♦ June 9 at 7 and June 13 at 6:30: "The Big Parade" (1925, King Vidor; silent). ♦ June 10 at 2 and June 16 at 3: "Between Midnight and Dawn" (1950, Gordon Douglas). ♦ June 10 at 3 and June 16 at 8: "A Man There Was" (1917, Victor Sjöström; silent). ♦ June 10 at 4 and June 16 at 6: "I Was a Communist for the FBI" (1951, Douglas). ♦ June 10 at 5 and June 16 at 2: "Daughters Who Pay" (1935, George Terwilliger). ♦ June 10 at 6: "Welcome, Mr. Marshall" (1953, Luis García Berlanga; in Spanish). ♦ June 11 at 6 and June 13 at 8: "For the Soul of Rafael" (1920, Harry Garson; silent). ♦ June 11 at 6:30: "Cabiria" (1914, Giovanni Pastrone; silent). ♦ June 14 at 6: "Faces" (1968, John Cassavetes). ♦ June 14 at 8 and June 17 at 4: "The Tower of Silence" (1925, Johannes Guter; silent). ♦ June 15 at 6 and June 16 at 8: "A Pilot Returns" (1942, Roberto Rossellini; in Italian). ♦ June 15 at 6:15: Short experimental films made in Los Angeles. ♦ June 15 at 8: "Romancero Marroquí" (1939, Enrique Domínguez Rodiño and Carlos Velo; in Spanish). ♦ June 15 at 8:15: Short animated films. ♦ June 16 at 4: "Zorns Lemma" (1970, Hollis Frampton) and "Winter Solstice" (1974, Frampton). ♦ June 17 at 5 and June 18 at 6: "Pretty Poison" (1968, Noel Black). ♦ June 18 at 6:45: "Mata Hari" (1931, George Fitzmaurice).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—The films of Samuel Fuller. June 9 at 2: "Dead Pigeon on Beethoven Street" (1972; in German). ♦ June 9 at 4:30: "White Dog" (1981). ♦ June 10 at 4: "Tigrero: A Film That Was Never Made" (1994, Mika Kaurismäki). ♦ June 10 at 6:30: "Street of No Return" (1982). ♦ Special screening. June 10 at 2: "Exiled" (2006, Johnnie To; in Cantonese). ♦ Through July 22: "It's Only a Movie: Horror Films from the 1970s and Today." June 16 at 2: "The American Nightmare" (2000, Adam Simon). ♦ June 16 at 4: "A Clockwork Orange" (1971, Stanley Kubrick). ♦ June 16 at 6:30: "Saw II" (2005, Darren Lynn Bousman). ♦ June 17 at 2: "The Texas Chain Saw Massacre" (1974, Tobe Hooper). ♦ June 17 at 4: "Considering Horror," a panel discussion with the writers Nathan Lee, Adam Lowenstein, Maitland McDonagh, and Joshua Rothkopf. ♦ June 17 at 6:30: "The Devil's Rejects" (2005, Rob Zombie).

PIONEER THEATRE
155 E. 3rd St. (212-591-0434)—In première. June 6-12 at 9: "Ghost Train" (2006, Takeshi Furusawa; in Japanese). ♦ June 9 at 4: "Louder Than Bombs" (2001, Przemyslaw Wojcieszek; in Polish). ♦ June 9 at 6:15: "Down the Colorful Hill" (2004, Wojcieszek; in Polish). ♦ June 13-14 and June 16 at 8 and June 15 and June 17-19 at 9: "Noriko's Dinner Table" (2005, Sion Sono; in Japanese). ♦ June 16 at 6: "Towncraft" (2006, Richard Matson). ♦ June 17 at 6: Short films about the musicians Bill Dixon and Leroy Jenkins. ♦ In revival. June 11 at 11: "The Evil Dead" (1981, Sam Raimi). ♦ June 18 at 6:30: "Les Visiteurs du Soir" (1942, Marcel Carné; in French).

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—"Cabaret Cinema." June 8 at 9:30: "Miracle in Milan" (1951, Vittorio De Sica; in Italian). ♦ June 15 at 9:30: "The Umbrellas of Cherbourg" (†).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." June 8-9: "Back to School" (1986, Alan Metter). ♦ June 15-16: "Amélie" (2001, Jean-Pierre Jeunet; in French).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—New Italian films. Except where noted, all films are in Italian. June 6 at 2 and 9:10 and June 9 at 2: "Desert Roses" (2006, Mario Monicelli). ♦ June 6 at 4:15 and 9:10 and June 12 at 4:30: "Secret Journey" (2006, Roberto Andò). ♦ June 7 at 2 and 6:30 and June 10 at 9:15: "The Unknown Woman" (2006, Giuseppe Tornatore). ♦ June 7 at 4:20 and 9:15 and June 13 at 4:30: "One Out of Two" (2007, Eugenio Cappuccio). ♦ June 8 at 2:45 and June 10 at 7:30: Short-film program. ♦ June 8 at 4:30 and 9:30 and June 14 at 4: "Dark Sea" (2006, Roberta Torre). ♦ June 8 at 6:30 and June 10 at 12:30: "Caravaggio" (2007, Angelo Longoni). ♦ June 9 at 4:15 and June 11 at 4 and 8:15: "See Naples and Die" (2007, Enrico Caria). ♦ June 9 at 6:15 and June 13 at 2: "In Memory of Me" (2007, Saverio Costanzo). ♦ June 9 at 9 and June 10 at 3:15: "The Family Friend" (2006, Paolo Sorrentino). ♦ June 10 at 6, June 12 at 3, and June 13 at 8:45: "Schopenhauer" (2006, Giovanni Davide Maderna). ♦ June 11 at 2 and 6:15: "Billo" (2006, Laura Muscardin; in Wolof and Italian). ♦ June 13 at 6:30 and June 14 at 2: "Primo Levi's Journey" (2006, Davide Ferrario). ♦ Special screening. June 12 at 7:30: "Evening" (2007, Lajos Koltai), followed by a discussion with the novelists Susan Minot and Michael Cunningham. ♦ Through June 28: Human Rights Watch International Film Festival. June 15 at 1:30 and June 19 at 9:15: "The City of Photographers" (2006, Sebastián Moreno Mardones; in Spanish). ♦ June 15 at 4, June 17 at 8:45, June 18 at 6:30, and June 19 at 1:30: "The Railroad All-Stars" (2006, Chema Rodriguez; in Spanish). ♦ June 15 at 6:30, June 18 at 9, and June 19 at 4: "Strange Culture" (2007, Lynn Hershman Leeson). ♦ June 15 at 9: "Mon Colonel" (2007, Laurent Herbiet; in French). ♦ June 16-17 at 1: "The Violin" (2006, Francisco Vargas Quevedo; in Spanish). ♦ June 16 at 3:30, June 17 at 6:15, and June 18 at 4: "Enemies of Happiness" (2006, Eva Mulvad; in English, Farsi, and Pashto). ♦ June 16 at 6:15: "Manufactured Landscapes" (2005, Jennifer Baichwal). ♦ June 16 at 8:45: Works in progress by Parvez Sharma, Senain Kheshgi, and Geeta V. Patel. ♦ June 17 at 3:30: "Everything's Cool" (2006, Daniel B. Gold and Judith Helfand). ♦ June 18 at 1 and June 19 at 6:30: "Carla's List" (2006, Marcel Schüpbach; in French, English, Serbo-Croatian, and Italian). The June 19 screening will be followed by a discussion with Carla Del Ponte and Richard Dicker.

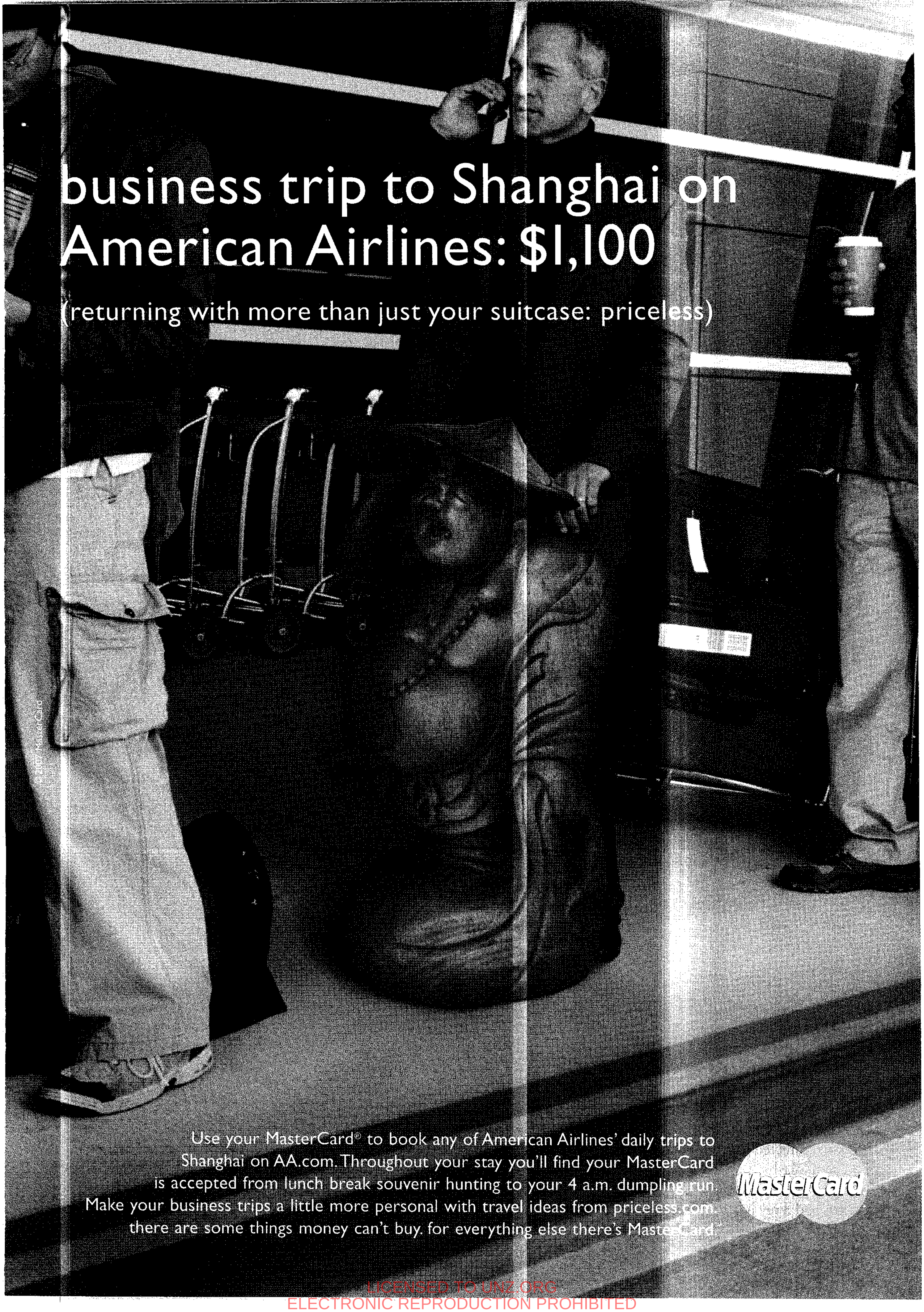
READINGS AND TALKS

BORDERS
Matt and Ted Lee, South Carolina-born siblings who are a cooking-and-writing team, read from and discuss their new collaboration, "The Lee Bros. Southern Cookbook." (Time Warner Center, 10 Columbus Circle, at 59th St. 212-823-9775. June 6 at 7.)

92ND STREET Y
The actor Richard Dreyfuss, who has a long history of political and social activism, talks about civic responsibility with Michael Kramer, a political editor at *New York* magazine. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. June 6 at 8.)

NEW SCHOOL
John Pilger discusses "Freedom Next Time," his book about the political conflicts in Afghanistan, Palestine, India, South Africa, and elsewhere, with Amy Goodman, the host of "Democracy Now!" (66 W. 12th St. 212-229-5488. June 7 at 7.)

EXPLORERS CLUB
In 2003, Riaan Manser embarked from Cape Town on a bike trip around Africa that covered almost twenty-three thousand miles. During the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two-year journey, he did jail time and fed a hyena; he talks about his adventures on June 11 at 6. (46 E. 70th St. 212-628-8383.)

"PERIODICALLY SPEAKING"
The Council of Literary Magazines & Presses runs this reading series, which pairs literary-magazine editors with emerging writers. Junot Díaz, of the *Boston Review*, presents the fiction writer Patricia Engel; Nick Flynn, of *Gulf Coast*, presents the poet Valzhyna Mort, and Doree Shafrir, of *The Crier*, presents the nonfiction writer Brendan Greaves. (DeWitt Wallace Periodical Room, New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. No tickets necessary. June 12 at 6.)

STRAND BOOK STORE
The *New Yorker* writer Alec Wilkinson reads from his new book, "The Happiest Man in the World: An Account of the Life of Poppa Neutrino." He'll be joined by Susanna Moore, who reads from her new novel, "The Big Girls." (Broadway at 12th St. June 12 at 7. No tickets necessary.)

THE DRAWING CENTER
"Artists & Audiences," a public program of the New York Foundation for the Arts, brings together Jenny Offill, Shamar Hill, Wah-Ming Chang, Vestal McIntyre, and Emily Blair, all of whom are 2006 N.Y.F.A. fiction fellows, for a reading of their work. (35 Wooster St. June 19 at 6:30. No tickets necessary.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

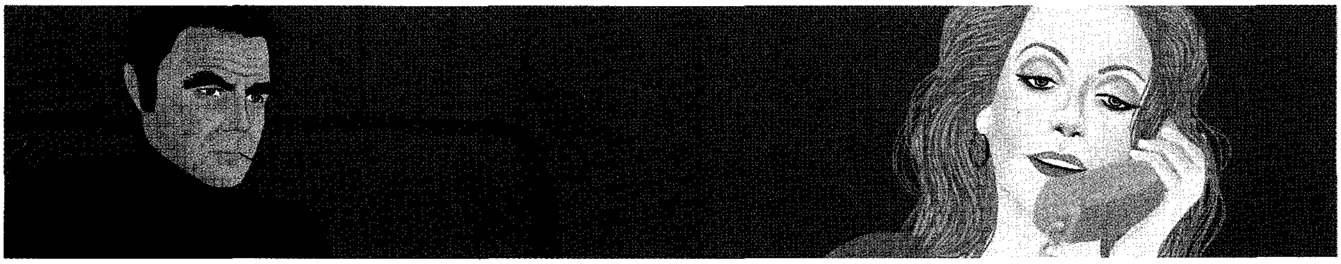
JAPAN SOCIETY
On June 6, four robots, including one that looks like a seal, visit the Japan Society during its ongoing centennial celebration showcasing the modernism and innovation of the country's technology sector. Other events include a dialogue on June 8 with Jim Wicks, a key designer at Motorola, and the industrial designer Shunji Yamanaka, as well as panel discussions on June 9 by more designers and writers who are experts in the field. (333 E. 47th St. For a full schedule, visit www.japansociety.org.)

BROOKLYN ARTS
The "Hip Hop Generation Next" festival is a day-long block party that celebrates what organizers describe as the four core disciplines of hip-hop: rhyme, graffiti, d.j.ing, and dance. Appearances by the dancer Brandon Albright and the d.j.s Swift and Forest Webb are scheduled, and the event culminates with a call for everyone at the festival to join an onstage finale. (Coffey Park, Red Hook, Brooklyn. June 9 starting at 2. For more information, visit www.dancinginthestreets.org.)

POETRY WALK
The twelfth annual poetry walk across the Brooklyn Bridge, which benefits Poets House, begins on the Manhattan side of the span and includes stops for readings under the arches along the way. Galway Kinnell will recite Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" at the end of the walk, at the Fulton Ferry Landing. (June 11 at 6:30. For more information, call 212-431-7920, ext. 2211.)

GRAND CENTRAL TERMINAL
"Celluloid Skyline," an exhibit by James Sanders based on his book of that title, celebrates the long and rich history of New York as seen in the movies. Highlights include films of street scenes made from 1896 to 1906, fascinating comparisons of period photographs to studio sets, and colossal "scenic backing" paintings of the city once used by M-G-M for process shots. If displayed in an art museum, they would be recognized masterworks of Photo-Realism. (Through June 22. For more information, visit www.grandcentralterminal.com.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
Christie's and the Long Island City Cultural Alliance came up with an imaginative project that effectively combines show-and-tell and lucre: the construction, exhibition, and sale of a "Maison Tropicale" prefab house, designed for use in France's African colonies, by the engineer and designer Jean Prouvé (1901-84). On June 5, the house, along with more than a hundred pieces of French design, goes up for auction. Earlier the same day, a more conventional sale of twentieth-century design pieces will take place, followed on June 6 by the second installment of a sale of items from the Pinhas collection of Daum glass objects (the first took place last year) and by an auction of antiquities (June 8). (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ In a controversial move, the venerable Albright-Knox Art Gallery, in Buffalo, is selling some two hundred works from its collection in order to buy contemporary art. Several of these pieces will be featured in **Sotheby's** upcoming auction of antiquities (June 7) as well as in its sale of Old Master paintings and European works of art (June 8); these include an elaborately decorated Roman bronze sculpture of Artemis and the stag and a Limoges enamel-and-copper Eucharistic dove (designed to store consecrated communion wafers), circa 1200. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ **Phillips** hosts a sale of photographs (June 7), as well as a selling exhibition (June 5-30) of selections from "TV Shots," an experimental series of photographs of a TV screen taken by the Belgian photographer Harry Gruyaert. (450 W. 15th St. 212-940-1200.)



"Hustle" and other films by Robert Aldrich, at BAM.

DIVYA SRINIVASAN

ON THE HORIZON

DANCE
PILLOW DANCE
June 20-Aug. 26

Jacob's Pillow, the venerable, laid-back dance festival in the Berkshires, marks its seventy-fifth anniversary with an impressive roster, including Dancers of the Royal Danish Ballet, Rasta Thomas's new company, Bad Boys of Dance, and the Mark Morris Dance Group. The season opens with the State Ballet of Georgia, directed by Nina Ananiashvili, with works by Balanchine, Petipa, and Trey McIntyre. (413-243-0745.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
BERKSHIRE LULLABY
June 22-24

New York may be America's first city for classical music, but in the early-music realm Beantown reigns supreme. The Boston Early Music Festival takes Lully's opera "Psyché" to Great Barrington for three performances at the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center. (617-661-1812.)

MOVIES
PAIN AND SUFFERING
June 28-July 31

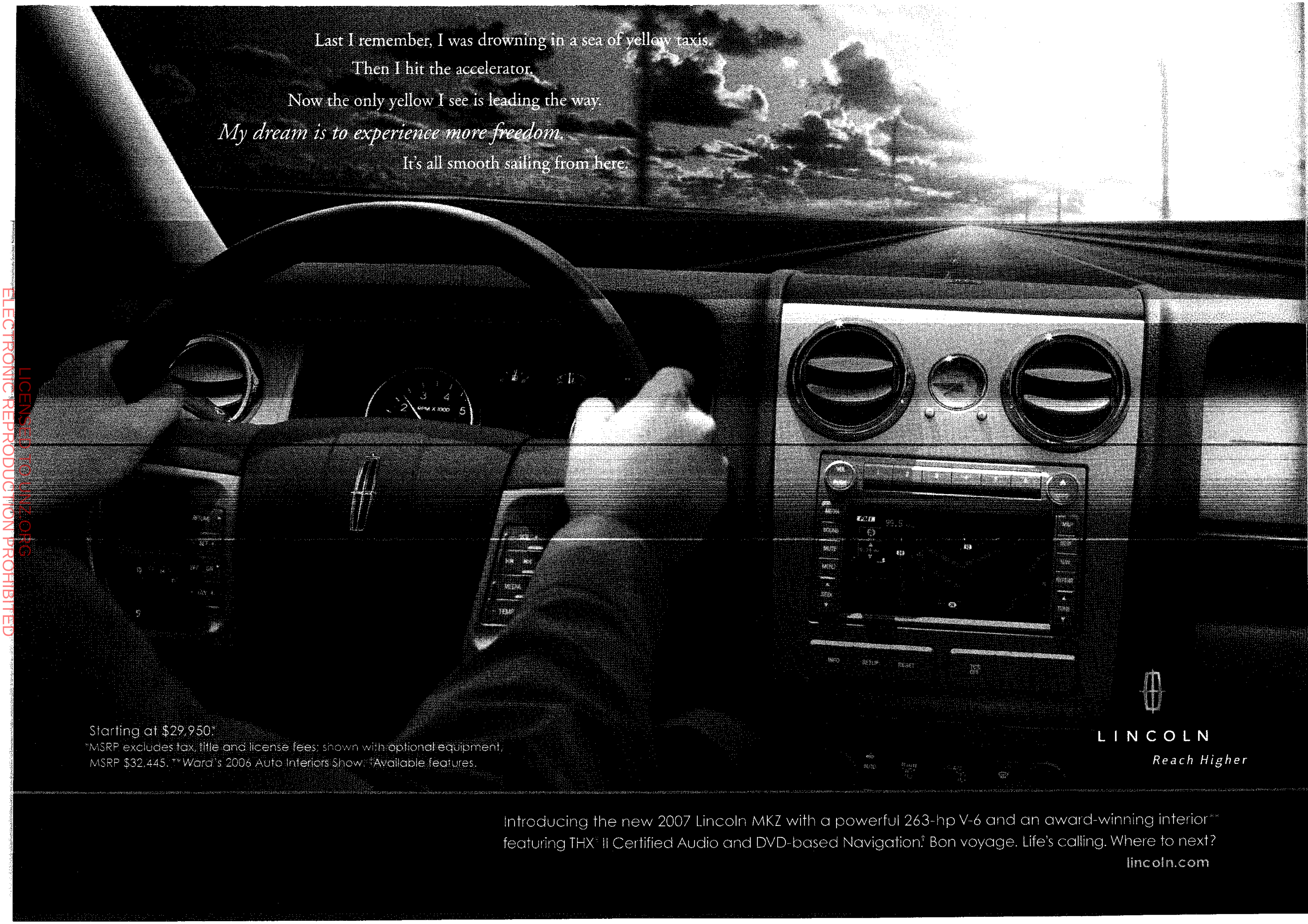
Robert Aldrich, who directed such violent masterworks as "Kiss Me Deadly" and "The Dirty Dozen," is represented at BAM by six less familiar movies, including "Hustle," a film noir with Catherine Deneuve and Burt Reynolds, and the dark "Twilight's Last Gleaming." (718-636-4100.)

ART
WALL TO WALL
June 28-Oct. 14

The conceptual artist Rudolf Stingel—who covered floors in Grand Central with garish floral carpets in 2004 and who spent much of the nineties making abstract paintings that adhered to the rules of an instruction manual he had authored—will be the subject of a mid-career survey at the Whitney. (800-944-8639.)

NIGHT LIFE
TEMPTED
Aug. 3

Chris Difford and Glenn Tilbrook, the Lennon and McCartney of New Wave, have reunited their band, Squeeze, which gave the world such pop gems as "Black Coffee in Bed" and "Hourglass." They'll play at the Beacon Theatre. (212-307-7171.)



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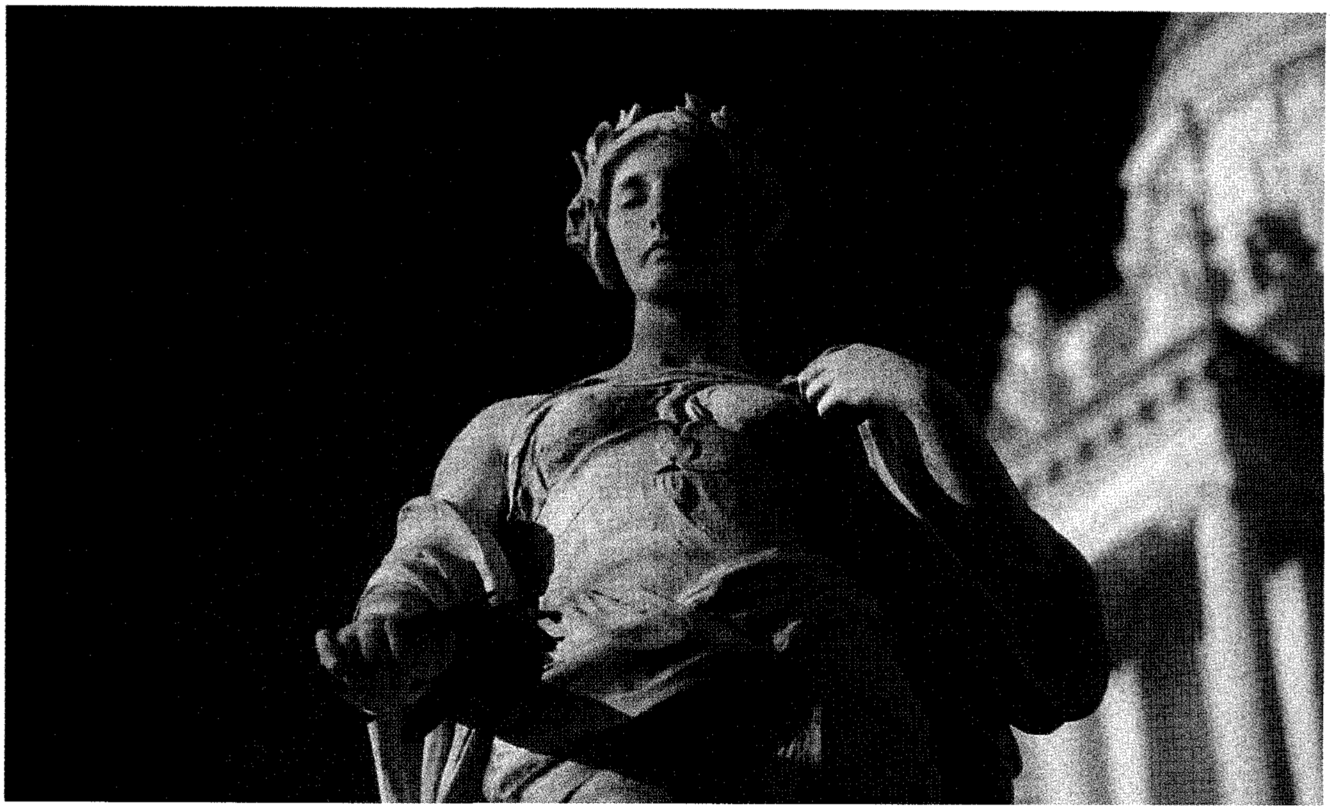

Titanic Memorial, Belfast City Hall

STORIED SPOTS

Belfast has long inspired poets, playwrights, and novelists. Now, the second-largest city on the island of Ireland is emerging as one of the most stylish and affordable destinations in Europe.

Infused with Victorian charm and urban energy, Belfast is taking its place alongside other top European cities as a prime destination for visitors from all over the world. New lodgings, such as the sumptuous **Merchant Hotel** and innovative **Ten Square Hotel**, sophisticated restaurants, and a wealth of literary and historical treasures, only serve to heighten its appeal.

Seamus Heaney, widely considered to be the most important Irish poet since Yeats, was born in 1939 outside the port city. In 1995, Heaney received the Nobel Prize for Literature, and was praised "for works of lyrical beauty and ethical depth, which exalt everyday miracles and the living past." He and numerous other Irish writers acknowledge the profound influence of the Belfast poet Louis MacNeice (1907–1963), who captured the essence of the city when he wrote, "I was born in Belfast between the mountain and the gantries/To the hooting of lost sirens and the clang of trams." The gantries refer to the towering cranes of the **Harland and Wolff shipyard**, where the legendary Titanic was built. A memorial to those who perished at sea in 1912 stands outside Belfast City Hall.

As a boy, C. S. Lewis (1898–1963), another Belfast native, was equally captivated by the "Belfast symphony"— the name given to the reverberating sounds of shipbuilding. Lewis also spent time exploring the coast and mountains of Northern Ireland, and immersed himself in Irish mythology. Those early influences later yielded "The Chronicles of Narnia," Lewis's series of children's novels.

By following the **C. S. Lewis Trail**, literature aficionados can visit locations that shaped the author's perspective and nurtured his affection for the city. Points of interest include the **Linen Hall Library**, the city's oldest; the **Gothic Belmont Tower**, which has a small exhibit about Lewis; and **Queen's University of Belfast**, where Lewis's mother, Flora Lewis, received her college degree. The school is also home to the **Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry**.

Other not-to-be missed Belfast sights include the **Belfast Botanic Gardens**, with its restored, molded-glass Palm House; **Waterfront Hall**, where performances range from dramas and musicals to rock concerts; and the **Crown Liquor Saloon**, a preserved gem of Victoriana known for its ornate décor. **Titanic Quarter**, a themed waterfront development that is currently under construction, will add one more reason to put Belfast on a Northern Ireland itinerary.

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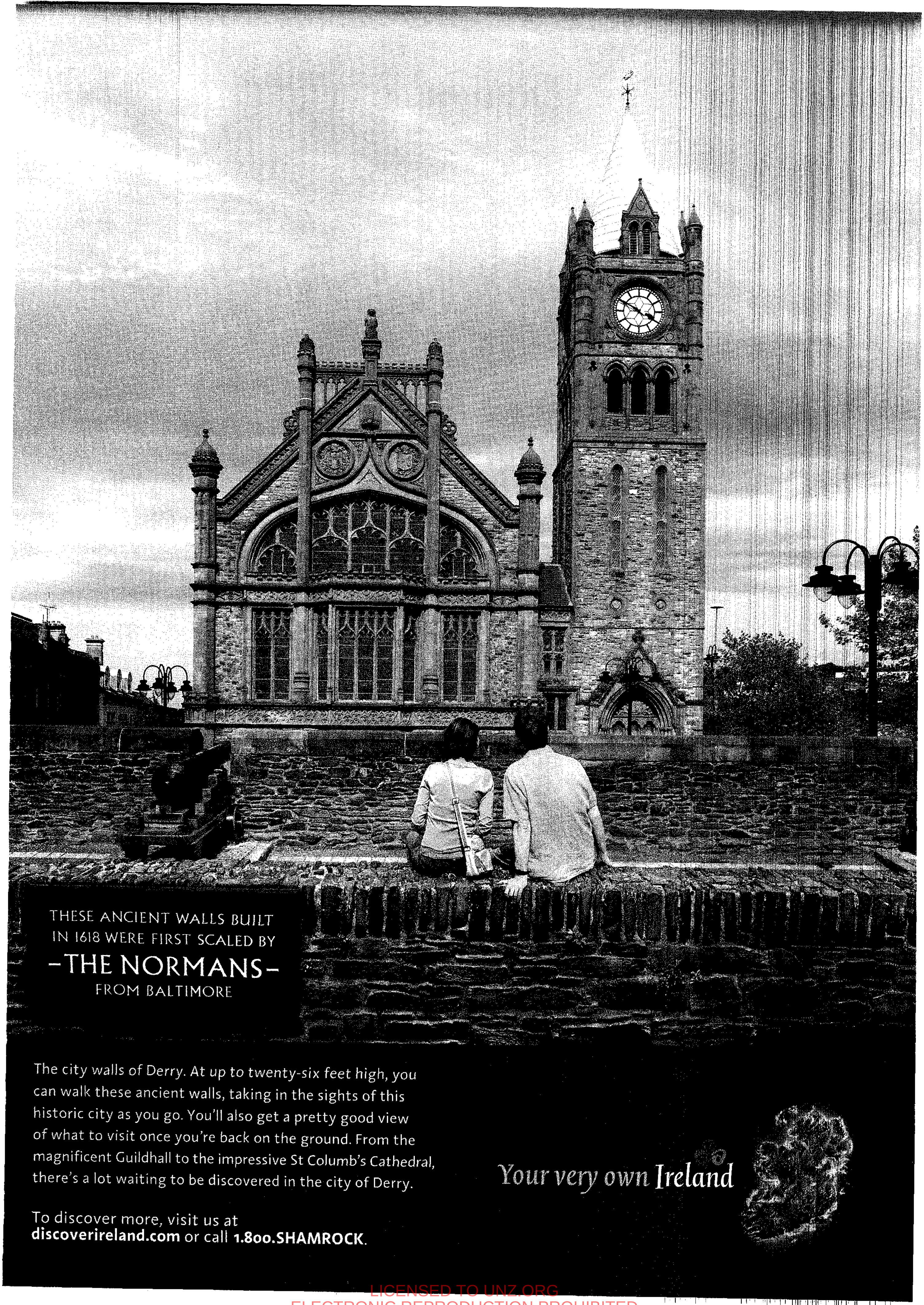

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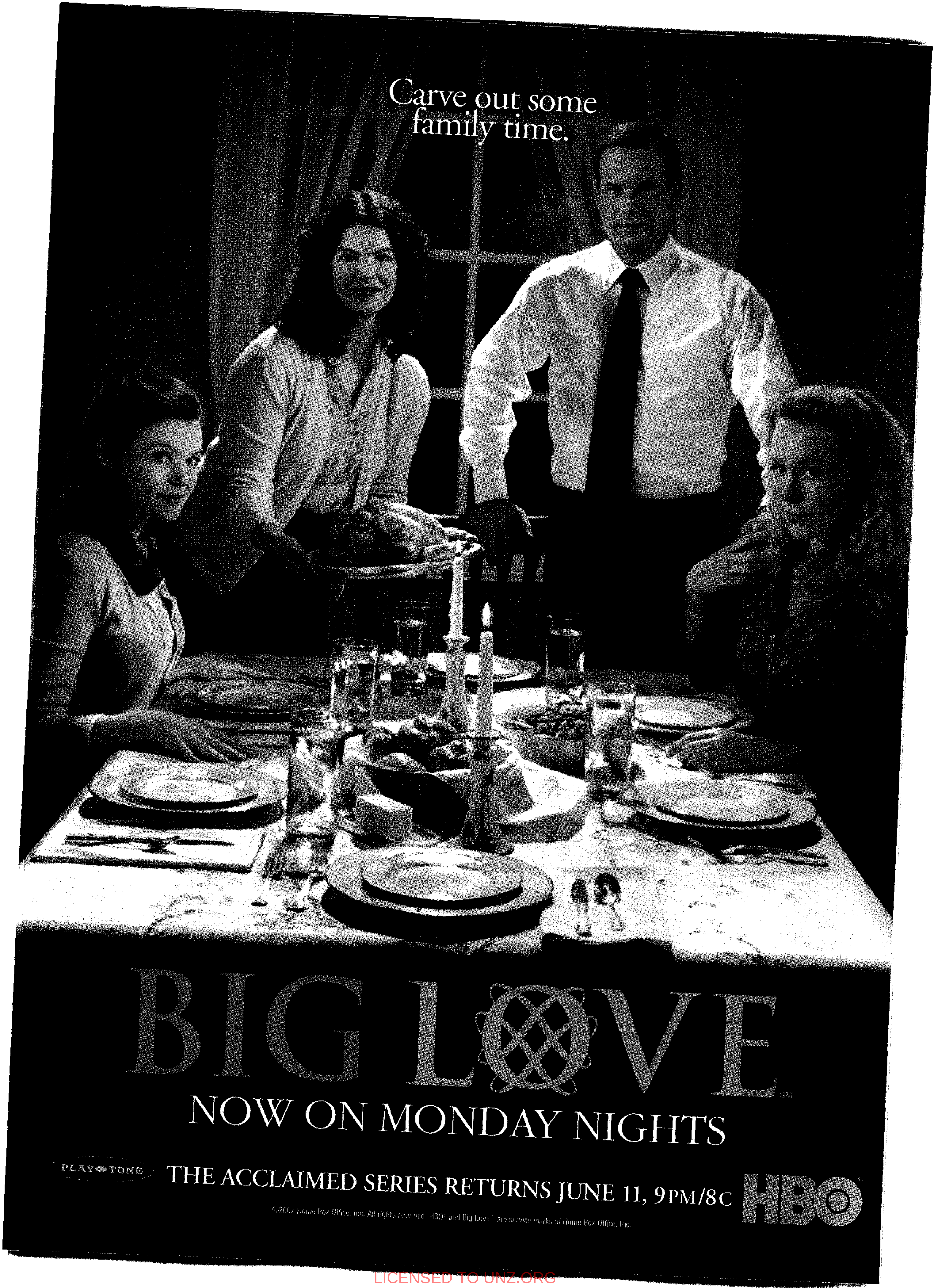
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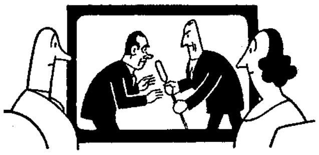
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

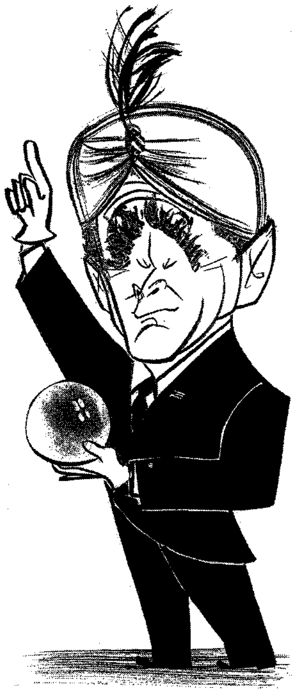
COMMENT
HISTORY BOYS



The crucial moment of Peter Morgan's new play on Broadway, "Frost/Nixon," about the four ninety-minute interviews that David Frost conducted with Richard Nixon in 1977, comes not during the famous final session, on Watergate, but the night before. Nixon, who has been drinking, places an imaginary but not unimaginable phone call to Frost, who has been agonizing over his abject failure to direct the conversation in the first three interviews. The ex-President, played by Frank Langella, points out that both men rose up from nowhere and, at that moment, as the decade meanders to a close, both seem bound for oblivion. "If we reflect privately just for a moment," Nixon muses, "if we allow ourselves a glimpse into that shadowy place we call our soul, isn't that why we're here now? The two of us? Looking for a way back? Into the sun? Into the limelight? Back onto the winner's podium? Because we could feel it slipping away? We were headed, both of us, for the dirt." Frost, played by Michael Sheen, accepts the truth of this but adds, "Only *one* of us can win." And Nixon warns him, "I shall be your fiercest adversary. I shall come at you with everything I've got. Because the limelight can only shine on *one* of us. And for the other, it'll be the wilderness."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

"Frost/Nixon" is about the struggle to control historical memory, with television the medium, self-explanation the means, and redemption the prize. Nixon, with his sterile capacity for insight, understood the reductiveness of historical judgment, and he wanted to head off his own ignominy while there was time. Of course, he failed: only historians and partisans remember what Nixon did before June 17, 1972, and the only one of the Frost interviews that anyone recalls is the session on Watergate. For better or worse, popular memory flattens out the facts. For decades, the Civil Rights Act and Medicare were obliterated from Lyndon Johnson's record by the glare of napalm. Jimmy Carter is defined by the hostage crisis and a word, "malaise," that he never uttered. Ronald Reagan brought down the Soviet empire. And so on.



George W. Bush did four good things last week. He strengthened sanctions on Sudanese companies and officials in response to the ongoing massacres in Darfur. He called on Congress to double the funding for global AIDS programs, to thirty billion dollars. He directed his envoy in Baghdad, Ambassador Ryan Crocker, to sit down with his Iranian counterpart and discuss ways of stabilizing Iraq—the most high-profile meeting between top officials of the two countries in years. And he attacked the demagoguery of right-wing critics of the bipartisan immigration bill. Each case has its caveats, flaws, and what-took-so-longs. But it should be noted that the three hundred and thirty-second week of the Bush Presidency was one of the best. Nobody will remember it.

Bush's legacy will be the war in Iraq and, secondarily, the array of decisions on prisoners, alliances, treaties, and preventive war which revolutionized American foreign policy after September 11th. Last year, when Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was asked whether Iraq would come to define the Bush Administration, she said, "I think it'll be bigger than Iraq, I think it will be the Middle East." This was wishful thinking on the part of the official most engaged in walking the Administration back from its own wreckage: a desire to define the President's record away from what it has actually wrought in our time and toward a hypothetical future. In fifty years, this thinking goes, a new generation will realize that the war kick-started political change, and forced the Middle East out of its deadly pattern of autocracy and extremism.

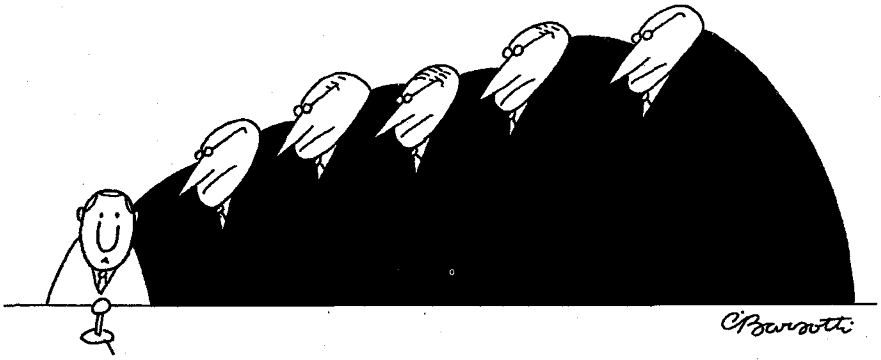
This exercise in justification by faith posits a visionary President with the courage to ignore temporary bad news. By this light, Bush's habit of declaring A to be B—for example, claiming that the surge reflects the public's desire for a change in war policy, or interpreting increased violence in Iraq as a token of the enemy's frustration with American success—becomes a sign of clarity and resolve, not delusional thinking. When everything is turning to ashes, take the long view. Last December, Senator Richard Durbin, of Illinois, described a meeting at the White House in which Bush discussed Harry S. Truman and the foreign policy of the early Cold War—initially unpopular, ultimately vindicated by history. According to Durbin, Bush implied that he will be similarly remembered.

Who knows what the world will look like in fifty years? It's hard to imagine, but perhaps the Middle East is at the start of a decades-long road toward democracy and stability. If so, though, history isn't likely to find the prime cause of that happy outcome in the Bush Presidency. Truman established the institutions and policies that guided America to victory in the Cold War. The loss of China, the stalemate in Korea, and the corruption and the domestic upheavals of the late forties and early fifties now seem secondary to the international architecture—the NATO alliance, the doctrine of containment, the legitimacy of democracies as a counter-force to Communism—that Truman left in place. Bush will have no such legacy. His Administration—or part of it—is trying to reverse or restrain his farthest-reaching policies without admitting that anything went wrong with them. We are not present at the creation of anything. A democratic Middle East would bear the same relation to the Iraq war as the United Nations does to the Second World War: the salvaging of a tragedy, not the fulfillment of a vision.

Historical legacies are bound up with the nature of the individual: leaders are remembered for the events and policies that express "the shadowy place we call our soul." Watergate captured Nixon's deepest qualities, including his uncanny sense of his own failure; at the end of "Frost/Nixon," as the disgraced former President is pressed for an apology, and Langella's face is frozen in torment across the multiple screens above his chair, Nixon seems to submit to his fate, which is his character. "Even Richard Nixon has got soul," Neil Young sang.

To see "Frost/Nixon" is to know what a deep decline there has been in public candor and Presidential self-knowledge since the days of Richard Nixon. By contrast, the current President will repeat the same sunny falsehoods and sententious illusions about the war until he leaves office, and then he will go on repeating them in retirement. And that will be his legacy: the war, and the shallow, unreflective character that made it.

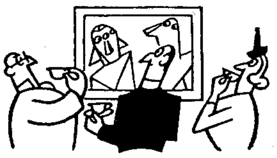
—*George Packer*



"May I consult with counsel?"

LIFE IMITATES ART

SAINTLY



Earlier this spring, Mary Carter, a professor of art education at Ball State University, in Indiana, came to New York for a conference. During a break in her schedule, she visited the Met with a friend. Carter is partial to the Renaissance, so they headed directly for the European collection on the second floor, where a helpful docent joined them. He shared a few stories about the museum's costly purchase, in 2005, of the Duccio di Buoninsegna's "Madonna and Child," and then, as they stopped to look at a fifteenth-century Venetian painting of a monk, he leaned in and asked, suggestively, "Don't you think that looks like Rudolph Giuliani?"

"Gosh, that's uncanny," Carter replied. Giuliani, as it happens, had just been campaigning in Indiana. "It was as if someone had Photoshopped Giuliani, but fixed it so the Byzantine conventions were right," she said. "It was there in the eyes and the mouth. They were exactly him."

The monk in the painting, by Carlo Crivelli, is St. Dominic, the patron saint of astronomers. He is robed, and clasps a holy book in his left hand and holds a white lily (purity, to an iconographer) in his right. ("I bet his hands even look like that," Carter said of Giuliani.) He is mostly bald, and, instead of the old Giuliani comb-over, wears a tonsure, with a tuft of hair at the front of his forehead. His heavy-lidded gaze would not easily be confused with that of the stoic Giuliani of September 11th, say, or that of the sardonic Giuliani who faced down squeegee men and ferret owners, but possibly—and it's a stretch—that of the forlorn Giuliani of divorce proceedings and the Bernie Kerik saga.

"It looks like he's getting ready to call on a reporter at a press conference," Carter said. "The corners of his mouth go down. His eyes have kind of bags—they're droopy eyes. Giuliani, when he's not smiling, he looks like a tired guy." She granted that the nose was not a perfect match—Dominic's is longer and more angular.

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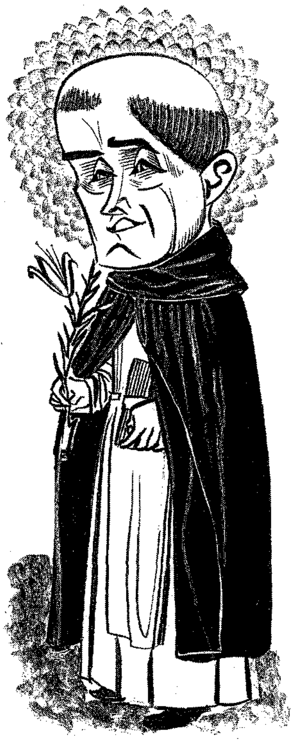
The docent, in any event, had noticed the resemblance before—this was, evidently, part of his usual spiel—and so he set about explaining (falsely, it seems) that the former mayor had a real-life connection to the Dominican Order, further impressing Carter. Before leaving the museum, she doubled back for another look. "You know when you have the distinct sense that a picture is looking at you?" Carter said. "But usually it's your great-uncle Fred, not Rudy Giuliani." (Giuliani, whom locals will not remember as a patron of the arts, chose not to comment.)

Whatever the merits of the case, it bears noting that Crivelli's "St. Dominic" does not attract a lot of lingering interest among museumgoers. It seems more like the Dennis Kucinich or the Tom Tancredo of early-Renaissance paintings. (Another Crivelli, hanging to its left, depicts a foppish St. George—John Edwards with curly hair.) One recent visitor to the gallery, after being asked if St. Dominic reminded him of anyone in public life, said, "I don't watch a lot of television." Steered toward politics, he then said, "You don't mean Giuliani," and snickered. "There's a big difference between St. Dominic and Rudy Giuliani." (Dominic was, among other things, famously ascetic.)



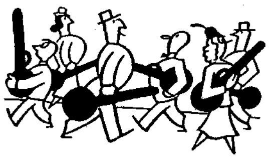
St. Rudy

Later, a class of schoolchildren came through. While most of them walked right by, one boy marched up to the would-be Giuliani and pointed. "That's the Devil right there," he said.

A Met spokesman, while offering tepid endorsement of the comparison ("Now that I'm leaning back in my chair, I can sort of see it"), said, "I've always thought Giuliani looked like Munch's 'The Scream.' "

—*Ben McGrath*

TAKES A VILLAGE DEPT. TRANSPLANT



When the teen-age Steve Earle left San Antonio, Texas, where he was raised, for Greenwich Village, in 1974, he had an image in his mind: the cover of "The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan," showing Dylan and his girlfriend, Suze Rotolo, strolling through the West Village on a snowy day. That was where Earle wanted to be. He made it as far as Nashville. There he became a protégé of Townes Van Zandt, and developed his talents as a songwriter, a country singer, and a hard-strumming guitarist, all of which were on display in his fine first album, "Guitar Town" (1986). By the end of the eighties, Earle seemed on the verge of becoming a troubadour to rank with Dylan and Springsteen. But he had also become an alcoholic and a heroin addict, and in 1994 he was sentenced to a year in prison on drug-related charges. After serving four months, he was released into a twelve-step program, and there, to his surprise, he said, "I had a genuine spiritual experience." His career recovered, and his most recent album, "The Revolution Starts . . . Now," won a Grammy in 2004.

But through these triumphs and disasters, six marriages, and assorted tattoos, that image of the Village in the jingle-jangle morning of the folk movement never left Earle's mind. Finally, in 2005, Earle got his own place in the West Village. He and his wife, the singer-songwriter Allison Moorer, moved into a garden apartment on the same block depicted in the "Freewheelin' " photograph.

Earle was in the Village the other day, working on a new album, which will be called "Washington Square Serenade." He had made it more like a hip-hop record, he said: "The pieces are set to beats. It's nothing like the way I usually work, when I bring a full band into the studio and we do the orchestrating right there." He had recorded the demos on a computer in his apartment—"I finally tested positive for Pro Tools," he said—and now, a few blocks away, at Electric Lady Studio, on West Eighth, he was adding guitars and other instruments (mandolin, bouzouki, harmonium), nearly all of which he plays himself. Electric Lady is the studio that Jimi Hendrix built to record his own music, and used only briefly before he succumbed to the same thing that Earle seemed determined to die of, except that he didn't.

Earle turns out to be a historian of the early folk scene in the Village. (He and his wife are planning to publish a walking tour.) He has read everything written about the era, and can tell you the address of Izzy Young's Folklore Center on MacDougal (No. 110; it's now a nail salon) and the location of Gerdes Folk City (corner of West Fourth and Mercer), where Dylan played his first big gig. "This is where they invented what I do," he said. "And it happened only because there were these three groups—the folksingers, the musicologists, and the writers—who happened to be living in this several-block radius. If that scene doesn't happen, then rock and roll never becomes literature. It just stays pop."

Earle has an opinion about everything. French fries, for example. Noticing some McDonald's food in the studio, Earle said, "I'll eat some bad shit, but I had heroin since the last time I had something from McDonald's. In Germany, I did have a McRib sandwich. They believe in the pig in Germany, so I ate one half of a McRib. But no French fries. Go to Raoul's, on Prince Street, for the French fries. They put duck fat on them. One thing you don't want to be in France is waterfowl—they find more ways to fuck you up if you're a goose or a duck."

Earle was in the studio's control room, but he was too large for it. He is tall, with long arms that he flings around as he talks, while his legs propel him as though he were being controlled by a remote. His hair is long on the sides and sparse on top; he has a leonine beard and a clear, direct gaze. He was wearing baggy jeans, a Western shirt, and cowboy boots. In recent years,

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Earle has lost a lot of weight, through the Atkins diet, and also quit smoking. He's finishing a novel for Houghton Mifflin, hosting a weekly radio show on Sirius, and playing a recurring character on "The Wire"—a former addict named Waylon, whom the show's creator, David Simon, based on Earle. He had a train to catch that evening for Baltimore, for the next day's shoot.

The album's producer, John King, of the Dust Brothers, was seated before the mixing board, working on an edit of Tom Waits's "Way Down in the Hole," performed by Earle, which will be the theme song of "The Wire" this season. Sweeping his hand over the console, Earle said, "This is all about how far you want to shine a flashlight inside your own asshole."

Earle's legs carried him out of the control room and into the much larger recording space, which contained about thirty of his guitars. (Although Earle is ambivalent about many forms of private property, he believes wholeheartedly in owning guitars.) On one wall was a large painting, commissioned by Hendrix, depicting beautiful alien chicks surveying a psychedelic landscape from the console of their spaceship.

Sitting on a drum stool, Earle talked about Hendrix and his connections to the Village and Dylan, and other subjects he had on his mind, such as Shakespeare, the reasons he likes John Edwards, and the beauties of New York. "I need to be able to walk out of my door and see a same-sex biracial couple walking down the street holding hands. That makes me feel safe."

But isn't Earle forty-five years too late?

"No way," he said, emphatically. "It's still a neighborhood. And Suze Rotolo's still here. And she looks so great!"

—*John Seabrook*

RIP VAN WINKLE DEPT.
FIXER-UPPER

Many New York City residences contain stacks of old newspapers, but most of these papers do not include reports on the funeral procession of Abraham Lincoln, the sinking of the Titanic, or the death of King George VI, as did those (from 1865, 1912, and 1952) found piled in the living room of a West Village town house that was recently put up for sale.

The house, at 112 Washington Place, is a four-story Federal-style building, constructed in 1832. Its owner, a seventy-nine-year-old man, had been living there alone for more than four decades, since inheriting it from his grandmother, who bought it in 1878. Many of the original details remained, including a winding staircase that split into two on the second floor, six fireplaces, a set of ornate French doors, and a working dumbwaiter. Decades-old paint—in one room, a robin's-egg blue—was peeling mightily, and a leaking roof had caused some plaster to collapse. The owner was not a man who leaped to make changes. As with the newspapers, the crumbling ceilings were left undisturbed.

Last year, the house finally got to be overwhelming, and the owner, through a lawyer, approached a team of three brokers from Prudential Douglas Elliman, who put the property on the market for $3.695 million. The listing touted a "rare opportunity to own best of bones!" before soberly concluding that the property was "in need of a full renovation." Because many of the lights in the house were not working, the brokers showed prospective buyers around by flashlight. Marco Pirozzolo, one of the brokers, said, "I would tell them this is not about money—it's about having the wherewithal."

The owner, a devout man, lived in almost monklike simplicity. He had no central heating or air-conditioning. He lacked hot water. He used only the top floor of the building, and slept in the smallest room in the house. Next to his bedroom was the kitchen, which contained a large mint-green enamel sink and a matching gas stove from the twenties, which he used to cook soup and make coffee. There was no refrigerator.

Among the prospective buyers was the actress Mary-Kate Olsen. "She showed up with her big sunglasses," Dennis St. Germain, another of the brokers, said. "She knew her real estate. She said, 'This is three million to renovate and it's a two-year ordeal, and I just can't do that.' " After six months on the market, the house was purchased by Blesso Properties, a development company, which plans to gut the interior and rebuild the house in a modernist style, with a double-height space connecting the rear of the garden floor and the parlor floor, both of which will open to the back yard. The two rooms on the second floor will be combined into a master suite. "These houses were built as functional," the company's president, Matthew Blesso, said the other day. "Today, we're making it into something more"—he paused—"spectacular." The dumbwaiter will be removed, and a penthouse floor with a roof deck will be added. A new kitchen, on the garden level, will have a refrigerator (a Sub-Zero). The asking price of the refurbished house will be in the range of ten million dollars.

Before demolition began, in early May, the brokers helped the owner sell things he no longer wanted—furniture, oil paintings, a set of gilded frames that held photographs and his grandparents' immigration papers. A collection of early American flags was dispersed among the owner's friends. "Several of them didn't have very many stars and were probably from the middle of the eighteen-hundreds," Scott Allison, another of the selling agents, said. "He used them as bedspreads." One could see a blue shirtwaist dress hanging in a second-floor closet. A wall calendar was open to November, 1974.

The owner donated the money from the sale of the house to a Catholic charity, leaving aside a trust to pay his living expenses. He has settled around the corner, in a one-bedroom rental. "His top priority was to be within a couple of blocks of Our Lady of Pompeii Church," Allison said. "Years ago, he had gone to St. Joseph's, across the street, but a pastor had taken the beautiful old statues that had been part of the church since it was built and put them out for the garbage. When he saw all of the statuary on the street, he went out and rescued the cupola that had been on top of the pulpit and put it in the back yard of his house." The man's new apartment came fully furnished, and is equipped with modern appliances. Pirozzolo recalled that one of the apartments he had shown the man "had one of those LG refrigerators, very dramatic, and he said, 'I don't know. . . . What am I going to do with this? I could use it for storage.' " The owner brought only a few things with him when he moved in, among them the Lincoln newspaper. "He's very happy," Allison said. "He loves his new apartment."

—*Margaret Borden*

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THE FINANCIAL PAGE

BE OUR GUEST!

Give the Senate some credit: in shaping the current immigration-reform bill, it has come up with one idea that almost everybody hates. That's the plan to create a new class of "guest workers"—immigrants who would be allowed to work in the U.S. for three two-year stretches, at most, provided that they return home for a year after each visit. Conservatives dislike the plan because they believe that the guest workers won't return home after their visas expire. Liberals dislike it because they believe the program will depress American wages and trap guest workers in a state of serfdom. The only vocal supporters of the provision are businesses that rely heavily on immigrant labor, and they're presumably just looking out for themselves.

History appears to give credence to the plan's opponents. Think about Germany's *Gastarbeiter* problem. Beginning in the early nineteen-sixties, Germany admitted immigrants from Turkey on short-term work visas. Many of these workers, instead of returning home, put down permanent roots, despite having no obvious way of becoming citizens. They were neither deported nor assimilated, and today they're a sizable minority in many cities and, in some sense, a society unto themselves.

In the U.S., the guest-worker experience has often been one of abuse and mistreatment, most notably during the infamous bracero program. It was started during the Second World War as a way of bringing in a small number of experienced farmworkers to harvest crops in California. But farm owners quickly came to rely on imported labor, and in time more than four hundred thousand braceros a year were crossing the border, only to end up being used as strikebreakers, forced to live in grim migrant camps, and paid less than they'd been promised.

Given this record, and the broader concerns about the effects of illegal immigration, the hostility to the new plan is understandable. It's also misguided. However imperfect, the guest-worker program is better than any politically viable alternative. Opponents of immigration sometimes imply that adding workers to a workforce automatically brings wages down. But immigrants tend to work in different industries than native workers, and have different skills, and so they often end up complementing native workers, rather than competing with them. That can make native workers more productive and therefore better off. (In construction, for instance, the work of carpenters and masons, who are often immigrants, can create a need for crane operators and foremen, who tend to be native-born.) According to a recent study by the economists Gianmarco Ottaviano and Giovanni Peri, between 1990 and 2004 immigration actually boosted the wages of most American workers; its only negative effect was a small one, on the wages of workers without a high-school diploma. And if by increasing the number of legal guest workers we reduced the number of undocumented workers, the economy would benefit even more.

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

Guest workers are also, paradoxically, less likely than illegal immigrants to become permanent residents. The U.S. already has a number of smaller—and less well-designed—temporary-worker programs, and there's no evidence that workers in those plans routinely overstay their visas. Mexican workers, contrary to popular belief, do not, generally, intend to live their entire lives in the U.S. Instead, as the sociologists Douglas Massey and Jorge Durand concluded after a comprehensive study of immigrant attitudes and behavior, most want to work "for short periods to generate an alternative source of household income . . . or to accumulate savings for a specific purpose," like buying a house in Mexico. This is harder to do as an illegal immigrant than as a guest worker, both because illegal workers are paid less and because when an illegal goes home he runs the risk of getting caught. One remarkable study found that after border enforcement was stepped up in 1993 the chances of an illegal immigrant returning to Mexico to stay fell by a third.

The new guest-worker plan is not a reprise of the bracero program. Guest workers would no longer be tied to a single employer—within certain limits, they'd be able to change jobs if they wanted—and would be guaranteed all the protections that the law extends to native workers, including the freedom to join a union. These protections would not necessarily insure fair treatment, especially given the Bush Administration's poor record of enforcing labor laws. But guest workers would have more rights than illegal workers, and be better treated. They'd also be paid better—better than they would as illegals, and far better than if they had to stay at home.

In fact, whatever benefits the guest-worker program brought to the U.S. economy or to particular businesses, the biggest winners would be the workers themselves. The Harvard economist Dani Rodrik has calculated that the economic value to poor workers of a comprehensive temporary-work program dwarfs the value created by lowering trade barriers or eliminating capital regulations. When a good made by a foreign worker enters this country, the worker gets only a tiny slice of what we pay. But when the worker himself comes into this country his earnings can rise by a factor of ten or more. There are few, if any, foreign-aid programs that do as much for people in developing countries as simply allowing them to work in the U.S. legally. Congress, of course, is under no obligation to care about foreign workers. But the program's costs to American workers are negligible, the gains for the guest workers are enormous, and the U.S. economy will benefit. This is that rare option which is both sensible and politically possible. Congress should take it.

—*James Surowiecki*

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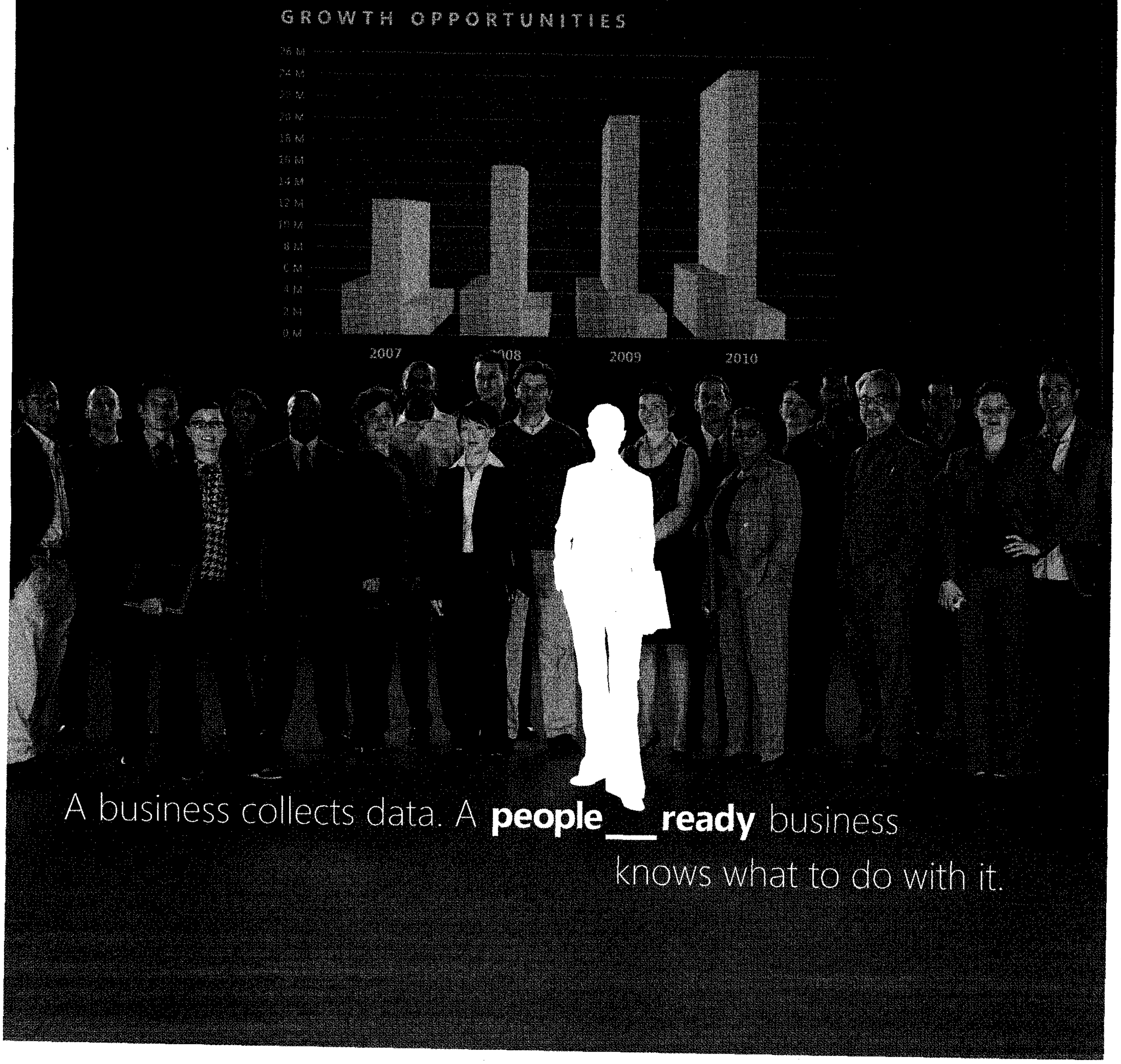
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LETTER FROM AUSTIN

FINAL DESTINATION

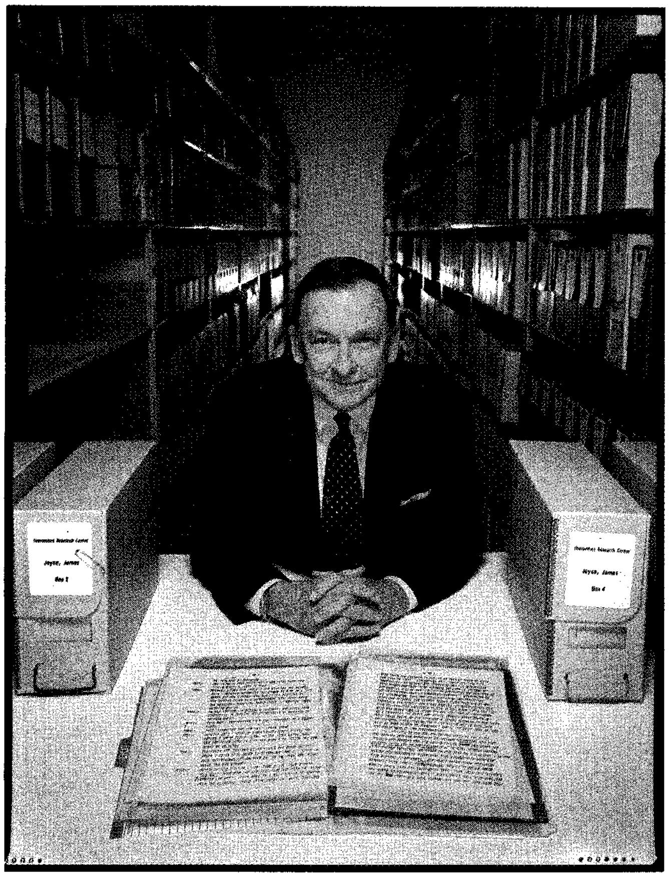
Why do the archives of so many great writers end up in Texas?

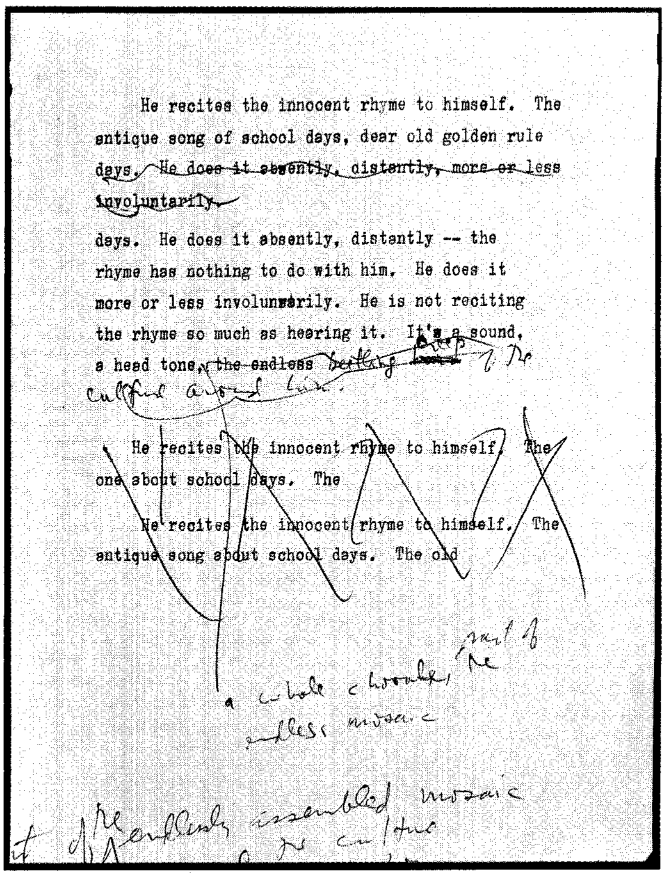
BY D.T. MAX

The Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, the literary archive of the University of Texas at Austin, contains thirty-six million manuscript pages, five million photographs, a million books, and ten thousand objects, including a lock of Byron's curly brown hair. It houses one of the forty-eight complete Gutenberg Bibles; a rare first edition of "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland," which Lewis Carroll and his illustrator, John Tenniel, thought poorly printed, and which they suppressed; one of Jack Kerouac's spiral-bound journals for "On the Road"; and Ezra Pound's copy of "The Waste Land," in which Eliot scribbled his famous dedication: "For E. P., *miglior fabbro*, from T. S. E." Putting a price on the collection would be impossible: What is the value of a first edition of "Comus," containing corrections in Milton's own hand? Or the manuscript for "The Green Dwarf," a story that Charlotte Brontë wrote in minuscule lettering, to discourage adult eyes, and then made into a book for her siblings? Or the corrected proofs of "Ulysses," on which James Joyce rewrote parts of the novel? The university insures the center's archival holdings, as a whole, for a billion dollars.

The current director of the center is Thomas Staley. Seventy-one, and a modernist scholar by training, he is mercurial and hard-driving. Amid the silence of the center's Reading Room, he often greets visiting scholars with a resonant slap on the back. In college, at a Jesuit school in Colorado, Staley pitched in a summer baseball league, specializing in a slow, sinking curve. His "crafty pitch," as he calls it, was good enough to attract the attention of professional scouts. The Ransom Center, under Staley's leadership, easily outmaneuvers rivals such as Yale, Harvard, and the British Library. It operates more like a college sports team, with Staley as the coach—an approach that fits the temperament of Texas. "People take a special pride here in winners," Staley says. "They *like* success." (After the Ransom bought its Gutenberg Bible, the center sent the Bible on a victory lap, displaying it at libraries, museums, and universities around the state.)

Staley works from behind an oak desk in a large office on the Ransom's third floor. A bronze bust of Joyce, by Milton Hebald, is in the foyer. The bookshelves hold copies of Staley's many scholarly publications; before becoming an archivist, he wrote studies of Dorothy Richardson, the first writer to use stream-of-consciousness narration in English, and of Jean Rhys, the author of "Wide Sargasso Sea." He was a founder of the *James Joyce Quarterly*, and was its editor for twenty-six years. As you walk down





He recites the innocent rhyme to himself. The antique song of school days, dear old golden rule days. ~~He does it absently, distantly, more or less involuntarily.~~

days. He does it absently, distantly -- the rhyme has nothing to do with him. He does it more or less involunarily. He is not reciting the rhyme so much as hearing it. It's a sound, a head tone, ~~the endless~~ seething ~~loop~~ of the culture around him.

~~He recites the innocent rhyme to himself. The one about school days. The~~

~~He recites the innocent rhyme to himself. The antique song about school days. The old~~

a whole chorale, part of the endless mosaic

it of the endlessly assembled mosaic of the culture

Tom Staley at the Ransom Center archives, and a draft page from Don DeLillo's "Underworld." Photographs by Dan Winters.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SHERMAN POWELL, MARTIN DUCKERY, AND OPHIRA EISENBERG ©: FLASH ROSENBERG; ANDY CHRISTIE ©: DAVID POLENBERG

PRESENTS

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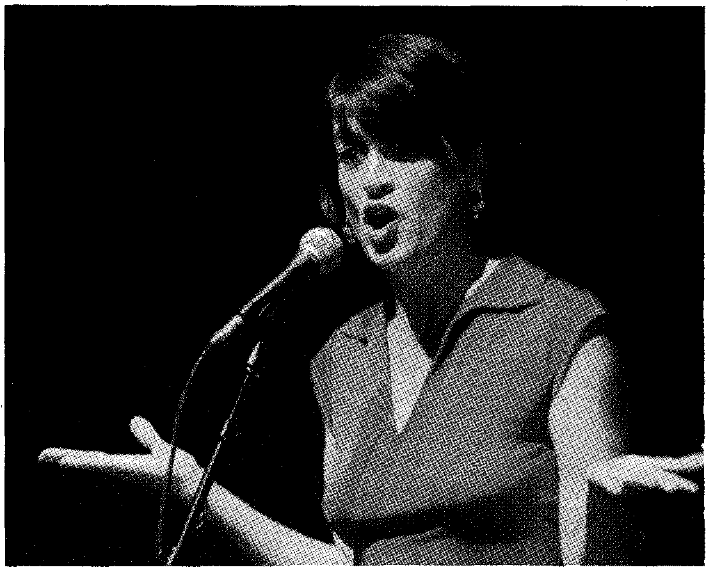

Everyone Has a Story

EYE SPY

Voted a favorite by The Moth audience

MICHAELA MURPHY is a multitalented Seattle-based actor, writer, director, producer, and storyteller. Listeners have heard her on WNYC's *Studio 360* and seen her at the Brooklyn Academy of Music and Lincoln Center. Her work as a playwright and actor has been featured at the Manhattan Theatre Club, La MaMa, and the Clinton White House. What follows is an adapted transcript of a story that Murphy told live at The Moth, recounting a summer day in Hyannis, Massachusetts, and the seaside adventures of two remarkable Irish-American families.

I grew up in Providence, Rhode Island, and for my entire childhood, we were never more than fifty miles away from the core of our universe: the Kennedys. We were Irish, they were Irish; we were Catholic, they were Catholic. They were family. We were like the relatives that they never got to see, but we knew, you know, they were busy, and we knew that they loved us. So anything that was happening to them was also happening to us. And their tragedy plus our own tragedy was a lot.

So this one Thanksgiving, after dinner and a family fight at Grandma's house, we were in the car and driving home, and the radio was playing this tenth-anniversary commemoration of the J.F.K. assassination, and I'm sitting in the back seat, and I start to cry. And my sister Erin says, "Hey Dad, Michaela's crying." My father pulled that car right over to the shoulder of I-95, he stopped it, he turned around and looked at us, and with tears in his own eyes, he said, "Don't you *ever* be ashamed to cry for that man."

My parents grew up near Newport, and they got married in the same exact church as Jack and Jackie—St. Mary's. And my father gave jewelry to my mother that was the exact replica of the jewelry that Jack gave to Jackie. Every Saturday night after Mass, my family would be in the living room, and we'd be happily-ever-aftering to the original soundtrack of "Camelot." And every year during the seventies, my four aunts would take me and my two cousins on their dream vacation: a rented beach house, in Hyannis, on the very cove sharing beachfront with the Kennedy compound.

Every day for an entire week, my aunt Pat would roll up her sisters' hair, my aunts would apply sunscreen to the back of their necks, the backs of their hands, and the tops of their feet. Then they would drag their beach chairs down to the water's edge, and set them up perfectly—not facing the water, not into the sun for tanning, but perfectly for spying on the Kennedys.

> "My aunts would drag their beach chairs down to the water's edge, and set them up perfectly—not facing the water, not into the sun for tanning, but perfectly for spying on the Kennedys."

They would sit there all day in the broiling sun with high-powered binoculars and keep a constant surveillance, and every year they'd have the same exact conversations. Around mid-morning the first sighting would be made, usually by my aunt Pat: "Ope, they got Rose out . . . Walkin'. . . Ethel looks drawn." And then about an hour later, my aunt Gert would say, "How old is Rose now?" And aunt Momo would make the calculations: "Well, let's see. Jack died in '63 when she was seventy-three, and Rose's birthday is two weeks ago this Thursday, and Joe died in '69, makin' her a widow at seventy-nine—so eighty-one." And then they'd break for lunch . . .

READ "EYE SPY" IN ITS ENTIRETY AT WWW.THEMOTH.ORG/ARTOFTHESTORY

TOP: MURPHY © DAVID POLENBERG; PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MOTH

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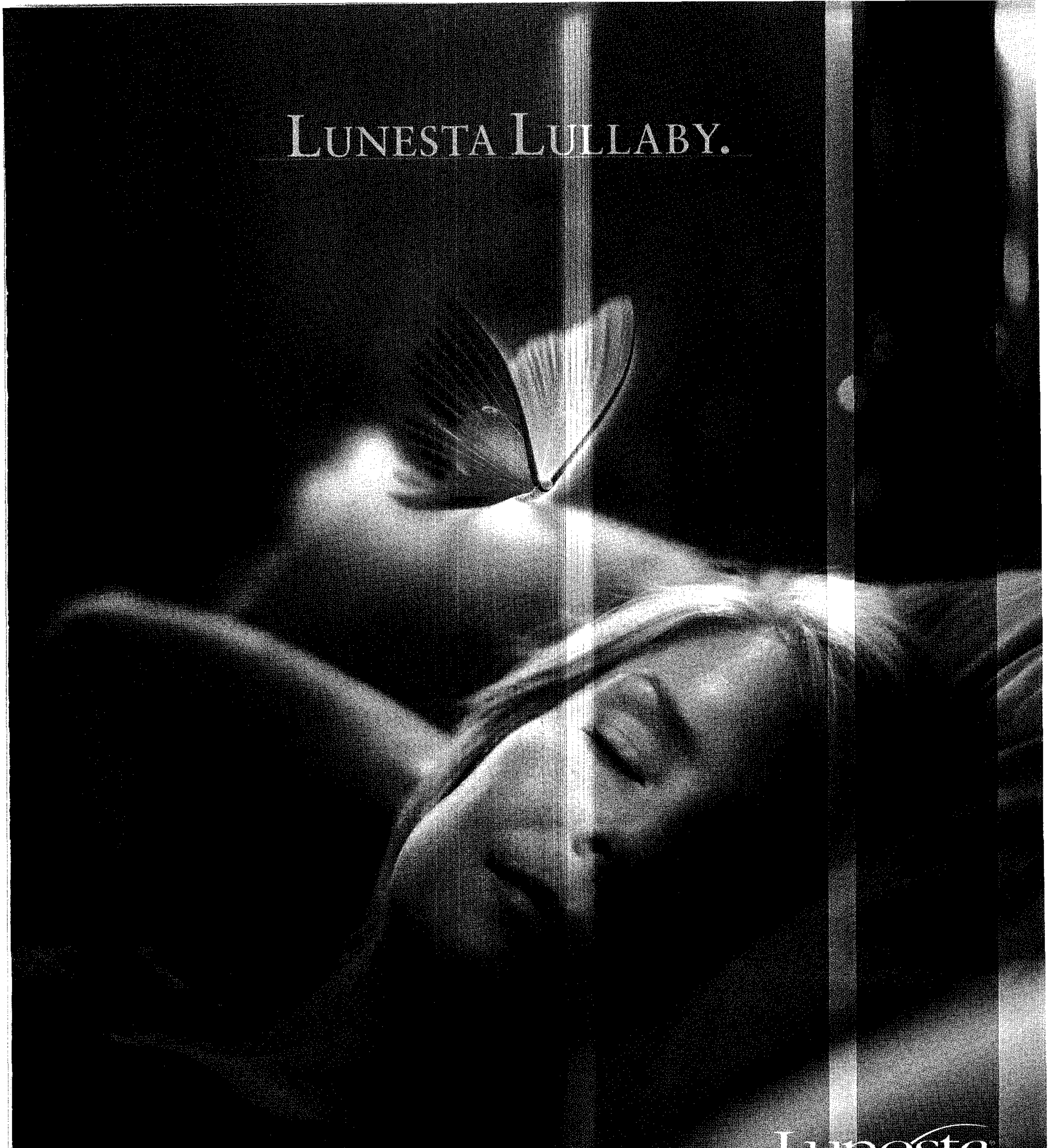
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(eszopiclone)Ⓒ

1, 2 AND 3 MG TABLETS

Please read this summary of information about LUNESTA before you talk to your doctor or start using LUNESTA. It is not meant to take the place of your doctor's instructions. If you have any questions about LUNESTA tablets, be sure to ask your doctor or pharmacist.

LUNESTA is used to treat different types of sleep problems, such as difficulty in falling asleep, difficulty in maintaining sleep during the night, and waking up too early in the morning. Most people with insomnia have more than one of these problems. You should take LUNESTA immediately before going to bed because of the risk of falling.

LUNESTA belongs to a group of medicines known as "hypnotics" or, simply, sleep medicines. There are many different sleep medicines available to help people sleep better. Insomnia is often transient and intermittent. It usually requires treatment for only a short time, usually 7 to 10 days up to 2 weeks. If your insomnia does not improve after 7 to 10 days of treatment, see your doctor, because it may be a sign of an underlying condition. Some people have chronic sleep problems that may require more prolonged use of sleep medicine. However, you should not use these medicines for long periods without talking with your doctor about the risks and benefits of prolonged use.

Side Effects

All medicines have side effects. The most common side effects of sleep medicines are:

- Drowsiness
- Dizziness
- Lightheadedness
- Difficulty with coordination

Sleep medicines can make you sleepy during the day. How drowsy you feel depends upon how your body reacts to the medicine, which sleep medicine you are taking, and how large a dose your doctor has prescribed. Daytime drowsiness is best avoided by taking the lowest dose possible that will still help you sleep at night. Your doctor will work with you to find the dose of LUNESTA that is best for you. Some people taking LUNESTA have reported next-day sleepiness.

To manage these side effects while you are taking this medicine:

- When you first start taking LUNESTA or any other sleep medicine, until you know whether the medicine will still have some effect on you the next day, use extreme care while doing anything that requires complete alertness, such as driving a car, operating machinery, or piloting an aircraft.
- Do not drink alcohol when you are taking LUNESTA or any sleep medicine. Alcohol can increase the side effects of LUNESTA or any other sleep medicine.
- Do not take any other medicines without asking your doctor first. This includes medicines you can buy without a prescription. Some medicines can cause drowsiness and are best avoided while taking LUNESTA.
- Always take the exact dose of LUNESTA prescribed by your doctor. Never change your dose without talking to your doctor first.

Special Concerns

There are some special problems that may occur while taking sleep medicines.

Memory Problems

Sleep medicines may cause a special type of memory loss or "amnesia." When this occurs, a person may not remember what has happened for several hours after taking the medicine. This is usually not a problem since most people fall asleep after taking the medicine. Memory loss can be a problem, however, when sleep medicines are taken while traveling, such as during an airplane flight and the person wakes up before the effect of the medicine is gone. This has been called "traveler's amnesia." Memory problems have been reported rarely by patients taking LUNESTA in clinical studies. In most cases, memory problems can be avoided if you take LUNESTA only when you are able to get a full night of sleep before you need to be active again. Be sure to talk to your doctor if you think you are having memory problems.

Tolerance

When sleep medicines are used every night for more than a few weeks, they may lose their effectiveness in helping you sleep. This is known as "tolerance." Development of tolerance to LUNESTA was not observed in a clinical study of 6 months' duration. Insomnia is often transient and intermittent, and prolonged use of sleep medicines is generally not necessary. Some people, though, have chronic sleep problems that may require more prolonged use of sleep medicine. If your sleep problems continue, consult your doctor, who will determine whether other measures are needed to overcome your sleep problems.

Dependence

Sleep medicines can cause dependence in some people, especially when these medicines are used regularly for longer than a few weeks or at high doses. Dependence is the need to continue taking a medicine because stopping it is unpleasant.

When people develop dependence, stopping the medicine suddenly may cause unpleasant symptoms (see *Withdrawal* below). They may find they have to keep taking the medicine either at the prescribed dose or at increasing doses just to avoid withdrawal symptoms.

All people taking sleep medicines have some risk of becoming dependent on the medicine. However, people who have been dependent on alcohol or other drugs in the past may have a higher chance of becoming addicted to sleep medicines. This possibility must be considered before using these medicines for more than a few weeks. If you have been addicted to alcohol or drugs in the past, it is important to tell your doctor before starting LUNESTA or any sleep medicine.

Withdrawal

Withdrawal symptoms may occur when sleep medicines are stopped suddenly after being used daily for a long time. In some cases, these symptoms can occur even if the medicine has been used for only a week or two. In mild cases, withdrawal symptoms may include unpleasant feelings. In more severe cases, abdominal and muscle cramps, vomiting, sweating, shakiness, and, rarely, seizures may occur. These more severe withdrawal symptoms are very uncommon. Although withdrawal symptoms have not been observed in the relatively limited controlled trials experience with LUNESTA, there is, nevertheless, the risk of such events in association with the use of any sleep medicine.

Another problem that may occur when sleep medicines are stopped is known as "rebound insomnia." This means that a person may have more trouble sleeping the first few nights after the medicine is stopped than before starting the medicine. If you should experience rebound insomnia, do not get discouraged. This problem usually goes away on its own after 1 or 2 nights.

If you have been taking LUNESTA or any other sleep medicine for more than 1 or 2 weeks, do not stop taking it on your own. Always follow your doctor's directions.

Changes In Behavior And Thinking

Some people using sleep medicines have experienced unusual changes in their thinking and/or behavior. These effects are not common. However, they have included:

- More outgoing or aggressive behavior than normal
- Confusion
- Strange behavior
- Agitation
- Hallucinations
- Worsening of depression
- Suicidal thoughts

How often these effects occur depends on several factors, such as a person's general health, the use of other medicines, and which sleep medicine is being used. Clinical experience with LUNESTA suggests that it is rarely associated with these behavior changes.

It is also important to realize it is rarely clear whether these behavior changes are caused by the medicine, are caused by an illness, or have occurred on their own. In fact, sleep problems that do not improve may be due to illnesses that were present before the medicine was used. If you or your family notice any changes in your behavior, or if you have any unusual or disturbing thoughts, call your doctor immediately.

Pregnancy And Breastfeeding

Sleep medicines may cause sedation or other potential effects in the unborn baby when used during the last weeks of pregnancy. Be sure to tell your doctor if you are pregnant, if you are planning to become pregnant, or if you become pregnant while taking LUNESTA.

In addition, a very small amount of LUNESTA may be present in breast milk after use of the medication. The effects of very small amounts of LUNESTA on an infant are not known; therefore, as with all other prescription sleep medicines, it is recommended that you not take LUNESTA if you are breast-feeding a baby.

Safe Use Of Sleep Medicines

To ensure the safe and effective use of LUNESTA or any other sleep medicine, you should observe the following cautions:

1. LUNESTA is a prescription medicine and should be used ONLY as directed by your doctor. Follow your doctor's instructions about how to take, when to take, and how long to take LUNESTA.
2. Never use LUNESTA or any other sleep medicine for longer than directed by your doctor.
3. If you notice any unusual and/or disturbing thoughts or behavior during treatment with LUNESTA or any other sleep medicine, contact your doctor.
4. Tell your doctor about any medicines you may be taking, including medicines you may buy without a prescription and herbal preparations. You should also tell your doctor if you drink alcohol. DO NOT use alcohol while taking LUNESTA or any other sleep medicine.
5. Do not take LUNESTA unless you are able to get 8 or more hours of sleep before you must be active again.
6. Do not increase the prescribed dose of LUNESTA or any other sleep medicine unless instructed by your doctor.
7. When you first start taking LUNESTA or any other sleep medicine, until you know whether the medicine will still have some effect on you the next day, use extreme care while doing anything that requires complete alertness, such as driving a car, operating machinery, or piloting an aircraft.
8. Be aware that you may have more sleeping problems the first night or two after stopping any sleep medicine.
9. Be sure to tell your doctor if you are pregnant, if you are planning to become pregnant, if you become pregnant, or if you are breastfeeding a baby while taking LUNESTA.
10. As with all prescription medicines, never share LUNESTA or any other sleep medicine with anyone else. Always store LUNESTA or any other sleep medicine in the original container and out of reach of children.
11. Be sure to tell your doctor if you suffer from depression.
12. LUNESTA works very quickly. You should only take LUNESTA immediately before going to bed.
13. For LUNESTA to work best, you should not take it with or immediately after a high-fat, heavy meal.
14. Some people, such as older adults (i.e., ages 65 and over) and people with liver disease, should start with the lower dose (1 mg) of LUNESTA. Your doctor may choose to start therapy at 2 mg. In general, adults under age 65 should be treated with 2 or 3 mg.
15. Each tablet is a single dose; do not crush or break the tablet.

Note: This summary provides important information about LUNESTA. If you would like more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist to let you read the Prescribing Information and then discuss it with him or her.

Rx only

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the corridor leading to Staley's office, you hear his cackling laugh.

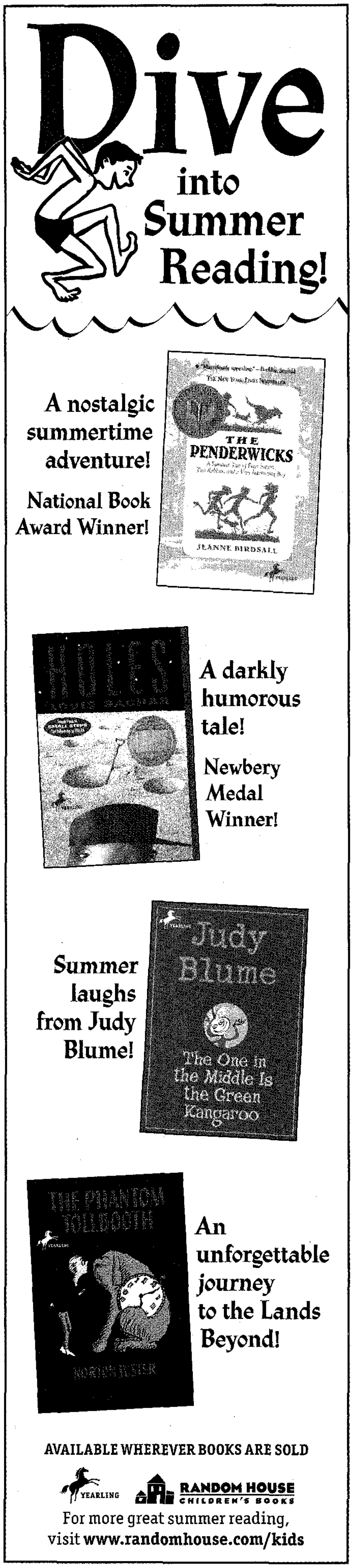
He has coined several maxims about the acquisition of archives, including what he calls Staley's Law: "Ten per cent of an archive represents ninety per cent of its value." When he tells you about an archive that he is hoping to buy, he stops and purrs, "Oooh, it's good, it's very gooood," his hill-country accent making him sound like a feline Lyndon Johnson. I recently went with him to a penthouse apartment in Miami, to look at a large archive of experimental poetry that had been collected by a pulmonologist, Marvin Sackner, and his wife, Ruth. Shortly after arriving, Staley pronounced it a "solid collection." Upon examining some work in detail—the collection included the 1897 journal in which Stéphane Mallarmé's poem "A Throw of the Dice" first appeared—he began to snuffle with excitement. After spending an hour with the archive, Staley declared it to be "one hell of a collection." He told me this outside, so that the Sackners wouldn't raise the price.

From his office in Austin, Staley keeps tabs on writers who interest him—e-mailing and writing to them about their plans for their papers. To him, the world is a map of treasures whose locations he already knows. His eyes are fixed equally on the aging British literary couple (who are moving to a smaller house, now that the children are grown) and the Pulitzer-nominated phenom (who thinks that his inclusion in the same archive as Graham Greene will help cement his stature). Staley can wait years for the right moment to make a bid. "It's chess, not checkers," he likes to say. "You have to think ahead." Once, he put a woman he thought was dating Cormac McCarthy on the Ransom's advisory board in the hope—vain, as it turned out—that it would prompt the reclusive author to sell his papers. Gene Cooke, an investor who is an old friend and tennis partner of Staley's, says, "You can always tell if Tom's ahead or not. When he's winning, it's Hopkins." (Staley will recite "The Windhover": "I caught this morning morning's minion, kingdom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon.") "When he's losing, it's Milton." (Staley likes to quote from "L'Allegro": "Hence loathèd Melancholy, of Cerberus and blackest midnight born.")

During Staley's two decades in the job, he has bought nearly a hundred literary collections—including papers of Jorge Luis Borges, John Osborne, Julian Barnes, Arthur Miller, Tom Stoppard, Penelope Fitzgerald, John Fowles, Isaac Bashevis Singer, and Don DeLillo—and, as he moves toward retirement, his buys are getting bigger. In 2003, Texas bought the Watergate papers of Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein for five million dollars. (A sealed file revealing the then secret identity of Deep Throat, Mark Felt, was deposited at a trustee's office in Washington.) In 2005, Staley paid two and a half million dollars for the collection of Norman Mailer, which included twenty-five thousand of Mailer's letters, along with the identification tags of his late poodle, Tibo. The archive—weighing twenty thousand pounds in all—came to the center in a tractor trailer. The New York book dealer Glenn Horowitz, who brokered the two deals, says of Staley, "He's looking for projects that have a culminating quality to them."

Staley has a gift for finding a way to buy archives that appeal to him. "I spend half my time raising money," he says. Whereas most archives take years to amass the money for an acquisition, Staley lined up donors for the Mailer collection in a few months. "We are able to respond with alacrity to an offer," Staley says. "A lot of things come to us because the owners know they will get a prompt answer. If we don't want it, then they can try somewhere else."

There is not much that other institutions can do when Texas is interested. After Osborne, Stoppard, Penelope Lively, and others sold their papers to Texas, the mass departure aroused alarm in Britain—a 2005 headline in the London *Times* proclaimed, "WRITERS UNITE TO FIGHT FLIGHT OF LITERARY PAPERS TO U.S." To counter the Ransom Center, Britain's national-heritage fund changed a rule prohibiting public money from being spent on material less than twenty years old; the exclusion was reduced to ten years. The change barely diminished the flow of work across the ocean, however. Staley does not have much sympathy for the aggrieved. Last year, at a conference at the British Library, Staley was asked about an essay in which the British poet laureate Andrew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Motion argued that national treasures belonged in the nations that created them. He retorted, "Like the Elgin Marbles?"

Perhaps disingenuously, Staley asserts that the Ransom Center's success is not primarily about money. "You know what matters most to writers?" Staley said. "It's the care we expend on their manuscripts. That's the most flattering thing. They just love it." Staley bears more than a passing resemblance to Mortimer Cropper, the "sinewy" American curator in A. S. Byatt's novel "Possession" (1990). Cropper, who works at a land-grant university in New Mexico, gleefully despoils England of its literary patrimony, promising writers to preserve their manuscripts with fetishistic care. As Cropper puts it, "They would join their fellows in perfect conditions—air pressure, humidity, light—our conditions of keeping and viewing are the best in the world."

Most major archives, particularly those in Europe, grew great with the cultures they were a part of, organically forming a repository for a community of writers and scholars. That is not the case with the Texas collection. The center was the invention of an ambitious dean: Harry Huntt Ransom. In 1956, Ransom gave a talk in Austin to a group called the Philosophical Society of Texas. His subject was the poor state of the university's book collections. At the time, the University of Texas was a good regional school with an excellent football team. Its library held the usual fare bought from rare-book collectors: fine bindings, travel arcana, books of local interest.

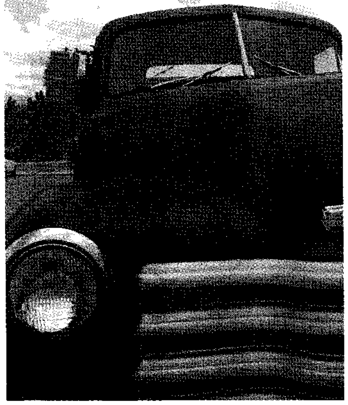
Ransom believed that one of the richest states in the country should have a book collection worthy of it. In his lecture, he proposed "that there be established somewhere in Texas—let's say in the capital city—a center of our cultural compass, a research center to be the Bibliothèque Nationale of the only state that started out as an independent nation." Texas's power brokers responded with money, and the university allowed Ransom to use some of its oil revenue for acquisitions. (Part of the university's land lies on the Permian Basin.)

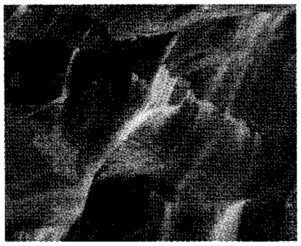
Ransom acquired books and manuscripts so rapidly that they piled up in the halls and stairwells. "G.T.T."—Gone to Texas—became a recognized abbreviation in the rare-book business. He was also innovative. He bought the collections of the living or only recently dead—writers whom Harvard and Yale considered too green. Ransom, who earned the nickname the Great Acquisitor, not only bought these writers' manuscripts and letters; he tried to gather everything from baby book to death mask. As a result, the center has Arthur Conan Doyle's undershirts, Evelyn Waugh's writing desk, a pair of beaded moccasins worn by D. H. Lawrence, Anne Sexton's glasses, and Isaac Bashevis Singer's Yiddish typewriter.

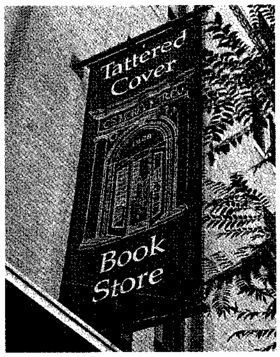
By 1970, the Texas collection had developed an emphasis on British modernism. It owned important manuscripts and ephemera from Samuel Beckett (his English translation of "Waiting for Godot"), Joyce (four signed copies of the first print run of "Ulysses"), Dylan Thomas (a manuscript of "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night"), and Malcolm Lowry (a handwritten manuscript of "Under the Volcano"). Around this time, Philip Larkin published an essay in which he warned of "the likelihood of a situation wherein the manuscripts of every considerable British writer since 1850 are in American hands."

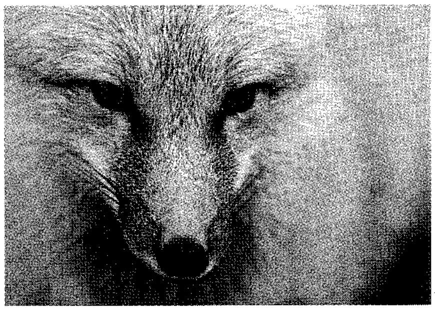
But there was no going back. As the biggest buyer in the archives market, Ransom drove prices way up, and prominent authors began to expect money for their drafts and letters. "Your gift of archives . . . will cause a painful precedent," Evelyn Waugh complained in a 1965 postcard to his brother Alec, who had given away his manuscripts to Boston University. "Most of your fellow-writers hope to support their declining years by sales to Texas." In a similar vein, the British novelist Olivia Manning wrote to a friend, "I am sure you could, if you tried, get that money from Texas.... Those arrangements with Texas are very elastic & I have twice received sums long before they were due to arrive. Try & see if I am not right! Yes, how much I regret the mss. I destroyed in the past."

In 1971, Ransom was forced to resign; he was brought down, in part, by complaints about the center's excessive spending and its secrecy. He died in 1976. A period of decline ensued, until









WRITES OF PASSAGE

Much of Western writing is characterized by a journey—leaving behind the familiar in search of adventure or a new life. Colorado's contribution to the literary landscape certainly fits that theme, which visitors can discover through events and places that highlight a writing tradition of exploration and travel.

This summer marks the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Jack Kerouac's "On the Road," which chronicled several pit stops in Denver. To celebrate the occasion, the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at Boulder's Naropa University is holding a **Kerouac Festival** from June 30th through July 1st, featuring panel discussions, film screenings, and a marathon reading of the novel.

From June 24th to 28th, the state will play host to the thirty-first annual **Aspen Summer Words** writing retreat and literary festival, which combines writing workshops with author readings and talks. Among the faculty this year is the Colorado writer Pam Houston, whose work often features Western settings and adventurous travels.

Travelers headed to Aspen can plan a side trip to nearby Woody Creek, where Hunter S. Thompson lived from the late sixties until his death two years ago at his "fortified compound" of Owl Farm. **Woody Creek Tavern**, the gonzo journalist's favorite hangout, is a well known local watering hole, its rustic walls covered with memorabilia and photos.

Visitors in search of literary landmarks can book a stay at the **Stanley Hotel** in Estes Park, a gateway to **Rocky Mountain National Park**. The nearly hundred-year-old resort hotel claims to be an inspiration for Stephen King's novel "The Shining"; it is also rumored to be haunted.

Colorado has a vibrant bookstore culture, with shops that serve as literary gathering places throughout the state. In Denver, the **Tattered Cover Book Store** has three locations and plays host to events most nights. **The Boulder Book Store**, up the road from the university; **Reader's Cove**, in Fort Collins; and **Between the Covers**, in Telluride, are just a few other places visitors can catch a book signing or pick up something special for the plane ride home.

Another literary tradition is the **Colorado Shakespeare Festival**, which will be held in Boulder this summer from late June through mid-August. Although the Bard is not a Western writer, many of his plays certainly capture the independent spirit the region continues to inspire.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT COLORADO.COM OR CALL 800-COLORADO.

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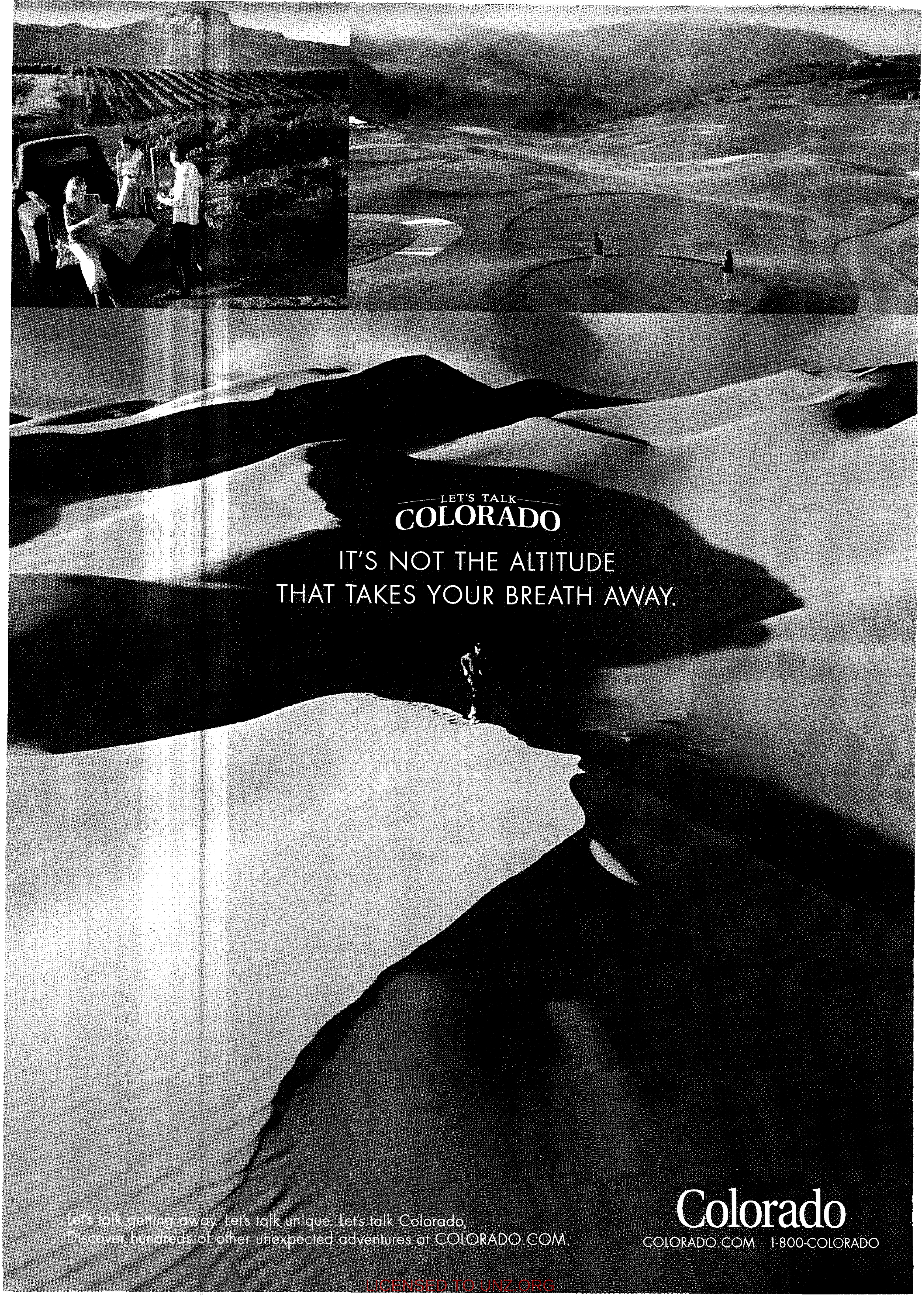
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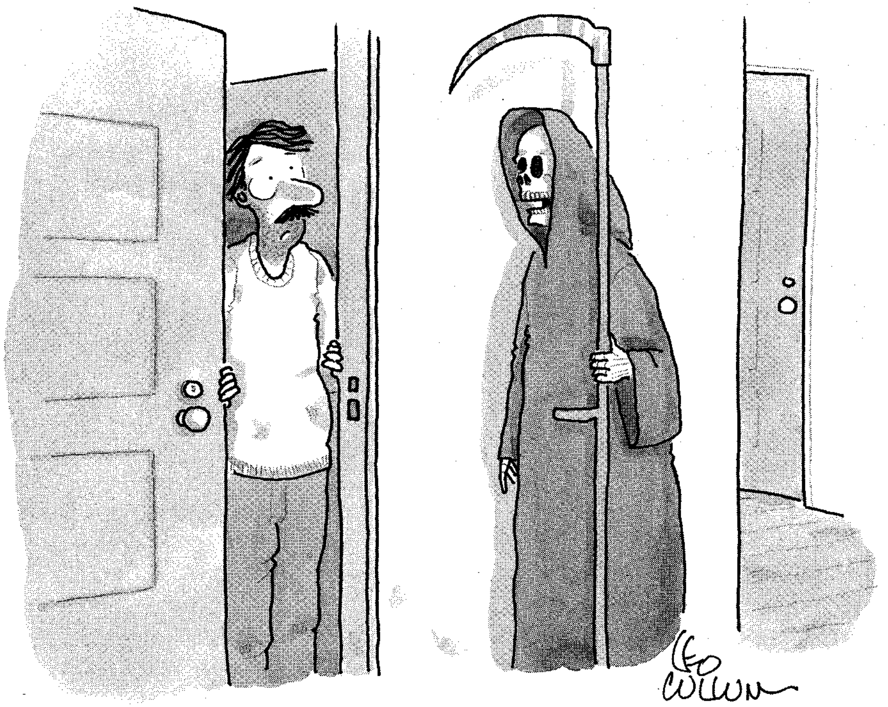


"I don't care if it's not you. That's the Social Security number you've been using."

1988, when a university search committee hired Staley. He was then at the University of Tulsa, where he had bought the archives of Edmund Wilson, the Joyce biographer Richard Ellmann, and Jean Rhys.

Staley was a natural collector. His mother "came from some means," as he puts it, and his father's family manufactured embalming fluid, among other chemicals. He grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania—the Texas accent comes and goes, depending on where he is and whom he's talking to—and filled his bookshelves with Big Little storybooks. "I had a library when I was twelve, and I numbered it," he says. "It was a giveaway, though I didn't know it." After college, he attended classes at Georgetown Law School; although he left after a few weeks, he couldn't bear to throw away his textbooks.

At Texas, Staley quickly learned to avoid the mistake of his immediate predecessor, Decherd Turner, who focussed on the preservation of manuscripts. "Acquisitions are what people like," he says. "They like to be a part of it." Shortly after he took the job, Staley had his first big success. In 1988, one of his curators got word that the archives of Stuart Gilbert, who had been James Joyce's translator and friend, might be for sale. Staley went to the senior administrators of the university—some of whom, he was convinced, did not know who Joyce was. "I said, 'This is an opportunity for the University of Texas to get back in the game, in a big way.'" Gilbert's widow wanted an offer up front. Staley took the gamble, paying her the full two hundred and sixty-five thousand dollars that she was asking, without examining the papers.

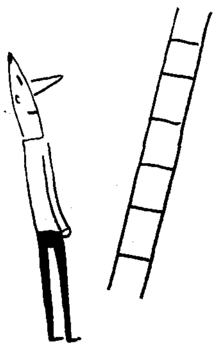
There were also legal hurdles. Gilbert was British, his widow French; they had been living in France. Staley feared that France, under its cultural-patrimony laws, might lay claim to the papers. To avoid litigation, Staley hired a bakery truck and had workers stuff the papers in it and drive it to the English Channel. "I said, 'Look, a very good day to do it would be on Ascension Thursday. There might not be as many guards out.'" The strategy worked. Gilbert's literary remains were loaded onto the Channel ferry; in London, they were repacked and shipped to Austin.

The archives were more than worth the price. They contained Gilbert's unpublished diary, which provides an intimate portrait of how Joyce wrote "Finnegans Wake." On January 1, 1930, Gilbert wrote, "At last J. J. has recommenced work on W. in P."—the work in progress. "Five volumes of the Encyclopedia Brit. on his sofa. He has made a list of 30 towns. New York, Vienna, Budapest. . . . Whenever I come to a name (of a street, suburb, park, etc.), I pause. J. thinks. If he can Anglicise the word, i.e., make a pun on it . . . the name or its deformation [are recorded in a] notebook. Thus 'Slotspark' (I think) at Christiania becomes Sluts' park. He collects all queer names in this way and will soon have a notebook full of them."

A student who was unpacking the Gilbert material for Staley found, as Staley puts it, "an odd thing." It was a typewritten sheaf of onionskin pages with handwritten emendations: Joyce's edit of the first chapter of "Finnegans Wake." Any document with Joyce's handwriting would be valuable, but these pages answered the question of how "Finnegans Wake," parts of which had originally been published in the magazine *Transition*, assumed its final form. "No one knew how those changes had been made," Staley says. "It was the missing link in the stemma." He estimates the value of the pages at seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

Staley believes that the best archives have an internal coherence. He conceives of the Ransom collection as a group of "nodes," a term he has borrowed from "Finnegans Wake." The modernist node consists of Beckett, Joyce, Eliot, Pound, the Gilbert archive, some Woolf holdings, and hundreds of minor correspondence collections connected to the greats. There is also a twentieth-century-British-theatre node—John Osborne, Tom Stoppard, David Hare—and one devoted to Jewish-American fiction, featuring Isaac Bashevis Singer, James Salter, Bernard Malamud, Arthur Miller, and Norman Mailer. These nodes have yielded hundreds of scholarly works—from Diane Middlebrook's biography "Anne Sexton" (1991), which relied on hundreds of unpublished poems at the Ransom Center to make a broader claim for Sexton's talent, to R. W. B. Lewis's "Letters of Edith Wharton" (1988), which offered definitive proof that Wharton had an affair in Paris with the journalist Morton Fullerton.

To buy the Singer archive, in 1993, Staley got together a group of local Jews who wanted to see the papers brought to Austin. ("You mean you're gonna get Singer out of New York?" one donor said. "I'm in!") Singer saved all his drafts and notes and much of his correspondence—a hundred and eighty boxes of material. Size, Staley believes, is one sign of a great archive; in such cases, you can see the transformation of a work from idea to final form, following the process obliquely through letters written to the author during the time that he was writing the work. (Letters *from* an author rarely come as part of his or her archive, which is why "nodal collecting"—collecting the archives of both sender and recipient—is so appealing to Staley.)



For writers, the need to get rid of their papers is sometimes practical, sometimes sentimental. The British author Penelope Lively called Staley in 1995 and told him that rain was leaking through the roof of her London home. "Tom, I guess I'm ready to move on this," she said. Staley bought her papers for fifty thousand dollars. In 1993, near the end of John Osborne's life, his wife greeted Staley at their home, in Shropshire, and presented him with four neat stacks of material. "Here are the ex-wives!" she said. Don DeLillo recently sent me a fax explaining his decision to part with his papers: "I ran out of space and also felt, as one does at a certain age, that I was running out of time. I didn't want to leave behind an enormous mess of papers for family members to deal with. Of course, I've since produced more paper—novel, play, essay, etc.—and so the cycle begins again."

Staley's literary expertise essentially stops with the nineteen-sixties, the final wave of modernism. Young assistants supply the knowledge that he lacks about current writing. Several years ago, his son, Tim, then an editor at the University of Texas Press, urged him to buy the DeLillo archive. An assistant in the publicity department, Travis Willmann, helped convince Staley that Russell Banks's archive should have a home at the Ransom.

With the assistance of this group of young people, Staley has created what he calls the "post-fifties list"—a group of six hundred or so current writers whom the center monitors. The roster is divided into three parts: "We have the writers whose archives we're trying to get—the A level," Staley says. "Then there's the B level—these would be writers where we would get their published material, first editions and so on. And then there's the C level, where we would try to get first editions of their major work." The C's include Martin Amis, Jonathan Franzen, and Dave Eggers. Some B's: David Foster Wallace, J. D. Salinger, and J. M. Coetzee. Staley was reluctant to divulge the A's, but he said that Ian McEwan was among them.

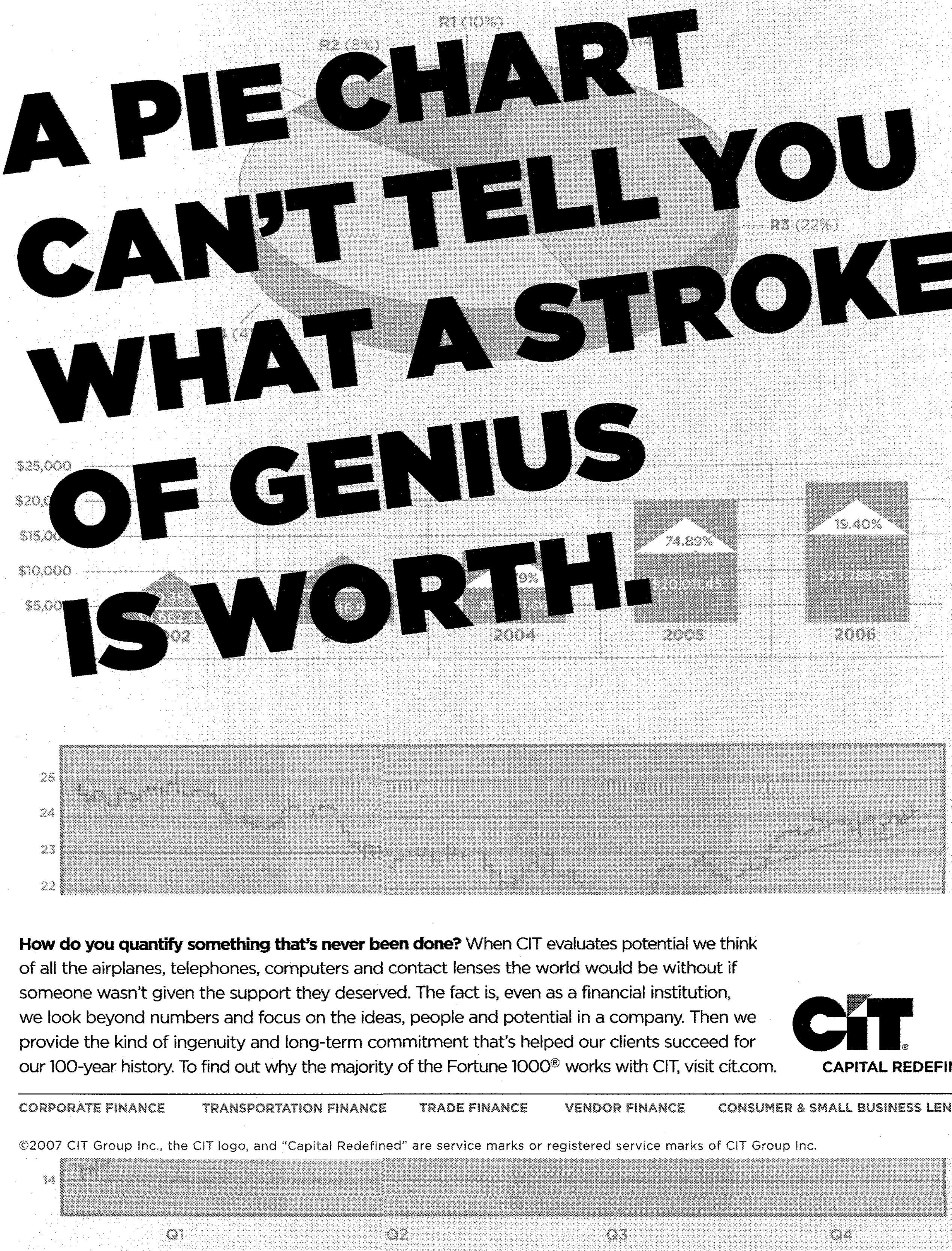
Staley's conservatism extends beyond his literary taste. He does not want to place the Ransom's archives online. He believes, quoting Matthew Arnold, that "the object as in itself it really is" can never be replaced by a digital reproduction. "Smell this," he told me one time when I was in his office, as he picked up a manuscript box from the Edwardian British publisher Cecil Palmer. We inhaled the scent: tobacco, mold, dust. "See, there's information in the smell, too," he said.

The same month that Staley bought Norman Mailer's archive, U.T. announced that the school would remove nearly a hundred thousand books from the undergraduate library to make way for "an information commons" of computer clusters. "That's not us," Staley said. I once asked Staley what role he saw the Ransom Center fulfilling fifty years from now, with its boxes of yellowing rough drafts typed out on manual typewriters and piles of letters written with fountain pens by candlelight. "There will be these bastions, whether the ruins of Athens or these archives, and they will be all the more valuable," he said.

The Ransom is, in a sense, a collection of ruins. Staley recently paid Tom Stoppard two hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars for sixty-two linear feet of his detritus, including a report card from 1944, when he was seven. (Stoppard was deemed "excellent" in literature.) At times, Staley's value system seems perverse: the raw thought being prized over the polished expression. As Stoppard put it to Staley, "Most of what you want is what I want to throw out." In an interview, Stoppard said of his archive, "I'm surprised that anyone wants it. I certainly do not put any value on it myself." He continues to send his leavings to Staley, treating the Ransom like "an incinerator that doesn't incinerate." He added, "I have an out-tray, and, quite often, my secretary says, 'What do we do with it?' We agree that maybe Tom Staley would want it—God knows why."

One day this spring, I flew to Austin to take a look at the Don DeLillo archive. The Bronx-born writer, whose papers Staley acquired in 2004 for half a million dollars, fits into the Ransom's collection well: for one thing, DeLillo is part of a node of expansive American fiction that goes back to Philip Roth and forward to novelists such as Jonathan Franzen, Rick Moody, and David Foster Wallace; DeLillo has corresponded with all of these writers. DeLillo counts Joyce as an influence, so he connects to the modernist node. And he has kept engaging, detailed notebooks that shed light on the intellectual foundation of his novels. Most important, he writes on a manual typewriter, producing draft after draft of his work, allowing scholars a chance to see his creative mind at work.

The hundred and twenty-five boxes of the DeLillo collection are housed in a cavernous space in the Ransom's basement which also serves as a way station for archival material still in shipping crates. In an archive, the analogy between an author's literary and physical remains is inescapable. As I walked beneath the fluorescent lights and exposed pipes, looking for DeLillo, I ran my hands along Singer's boxes, on metal shelves. Another room contained rejection letters from Alfred A. Knopf, the publisher. (In an internal memo, a Knopf editor said of "The Bell Jar," by Sylvia Plath, "There certainly isn't enough genuine talent for us to take notice.") I had been in Austin on the day, in 2005, that Norman Mailer took a tour of the archives. I followed him as the curators pointed to his future neighbors: Singer, Greene, DeLillo, C.P. Snow. Mailer, leaning heavily on two canes that supported his arthritic knees, fixed his eyes on the empty aisle before him. "It's certainly appropriate," he told



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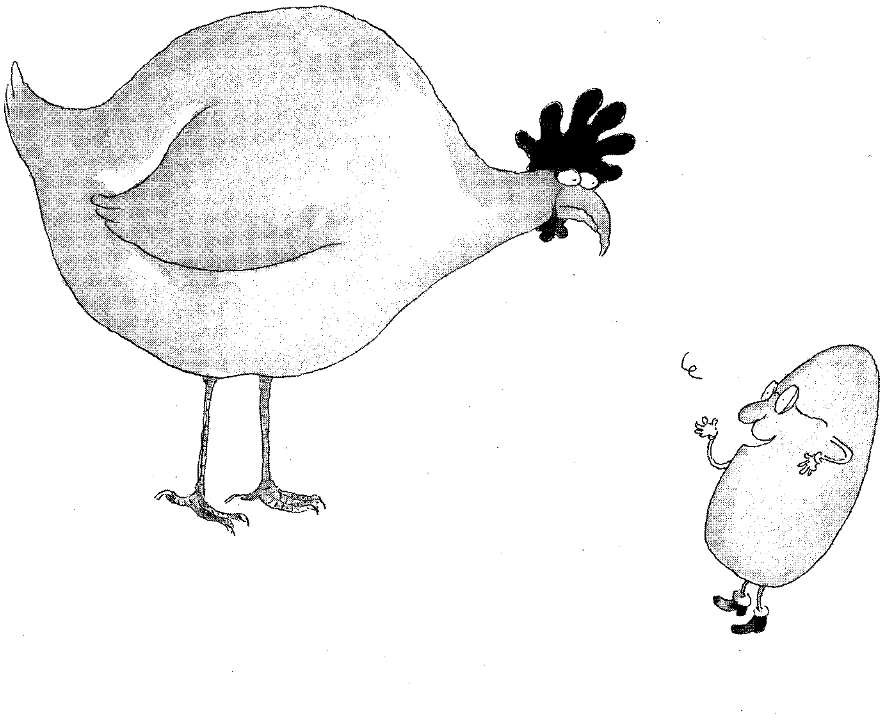
Staley afterward. "We all wind up in boxes anyway."

On the day of my recent visit, the conservators were reconstructing an old faux-leather address book of Mailer's, ordering the loose pages and using bright white Japanese paper to mend a tear. (Styles in conservation change over the decades: the "invisible mend" has been replaced by techniques that allow the scholar to see the sutures.) Elsewhere, staff members were trying to salvage a producer's box of Hollywood scripts; the bottom of the sheets had been nibbled away by cockroaches.

A conservator named Mary Baughman showed me around the basement. She had just placed ten Office Depot boxes from a local humorist in a hundred-square-foot freezer, to check for infestation. She inspected some bug traps. "There's a spider," she said. "And, ooh, there's something larger—a silverfish." She ordered the material to be "frozen to the center," and asked me if I'd like to see the vermin collection she keeps in a small container. "It's a morgue, not a zoo," she said, pointing out the carcasses of various beetle species. "Some like protein. Some like starch. This is a dermestid." Some archives arrive at the Ransom in a comically filthy state: when the conservation department opened Isaac Bashevis Singer's boxes, a half-eaten sandwich and some old socks fell out.

Baughman had only good things to say about the condition of DeLillo's manuscripts. When I pulled them off the metal shelves, they were eerily immaculate—embalmed in acid-free manila folders inside blue legal-sized boxes, each about the size of an accordion folder. I found them on a shelf next to two volumes of Walter de la Mare's correspondence; Anthony Burgess was in the next row, James Agee in the row after that.

Archives are like books without indexes: you know in a general way if you're interested in the subject, but there is no shortcut to finding out if what you're really looking for is in there. Archivists produce what is called a "finding aid." The finding aid is an overview of what an archive contains—drafts, letters, newspaper clippings, foreign contracts—but it does not detail what each item says, who is mentioned in it, or why it matters. Usually, the only person to have read the entirety of an archive is the author, and the authority on its contents is the scholar who has studied it the most. (In 1986, the British writer Stephen Spender, whose papers are at Austin, discovered a novel in manuscript that he had forgotten he'd written.)



"Well, let's stop arguing—we're both here now."

The DeLillo finding aid shows which folder contains which draft of which novel, but not whether the draft is different in important ways from a previous one. It records that DeLillo's 1972 novel "End Zone" originally bore the title "The Self-Erasing Word," but you have to open the proper folder and look at the title page to see that it also had been called "Modes of Disaster Technology." (The phrase appears in the book.) Similarly, the finding aid tells you that DeLillo's original title for "White Noise" (1985) was "Panasonic," but you have to burrow into his correspondence from 1984 to discover how upset DeLillo was when the Japanese electronics manufacturer that owns Panasonic declined his request to use the name. " 'Panasonic' as a title is crucial for a number of reasons," DeLillo wrote to his then editor, Elisabeth Sifton. He went on, "The novel is filled with the sounds of people's voices, with sirens, loudspeakers, bullhorns, kitchen appliances, with radio and TV transmissions, with references to beams, rays, sound waves, etc. . . . Jack, listening to people talk on the telephone and musing on his own death, thinks 'all sounds, all souls.' (Page 369.) Again the notion of *pan-sonus* connected to a fear of death. There is still another instance in which Greek roots are important. Jack associates the god Pan with his fear of death." The archive also contains two pages of other titles that DeLillo concocted—from "All Souls" and "Ultrasonic" to "White Noise"—written in jumpy capital letters.

Some authors' archives create a picture of the era in which they lived: Mailer's papers are wide-ranging—political and social. DeLillo's archives are narrow but pure. You sense, in his papers, that his life is work and thinking about work; even when he is somewhere else, his mind is still attached to his desk. Materials related to the composition of his twelve novels, his plays, and his stories take up ninety or so boxes—a high percentage of the whole. They underscore DeLillo's commitment to what he called, in a *Paris Review* interview, "the slogging reality of the no-man's-land of the long novel." The archive also contains some seminal newspaper clippings, such as a 1982 account, from the *Times*, of a Missouri town contaminated by dioxin—one of

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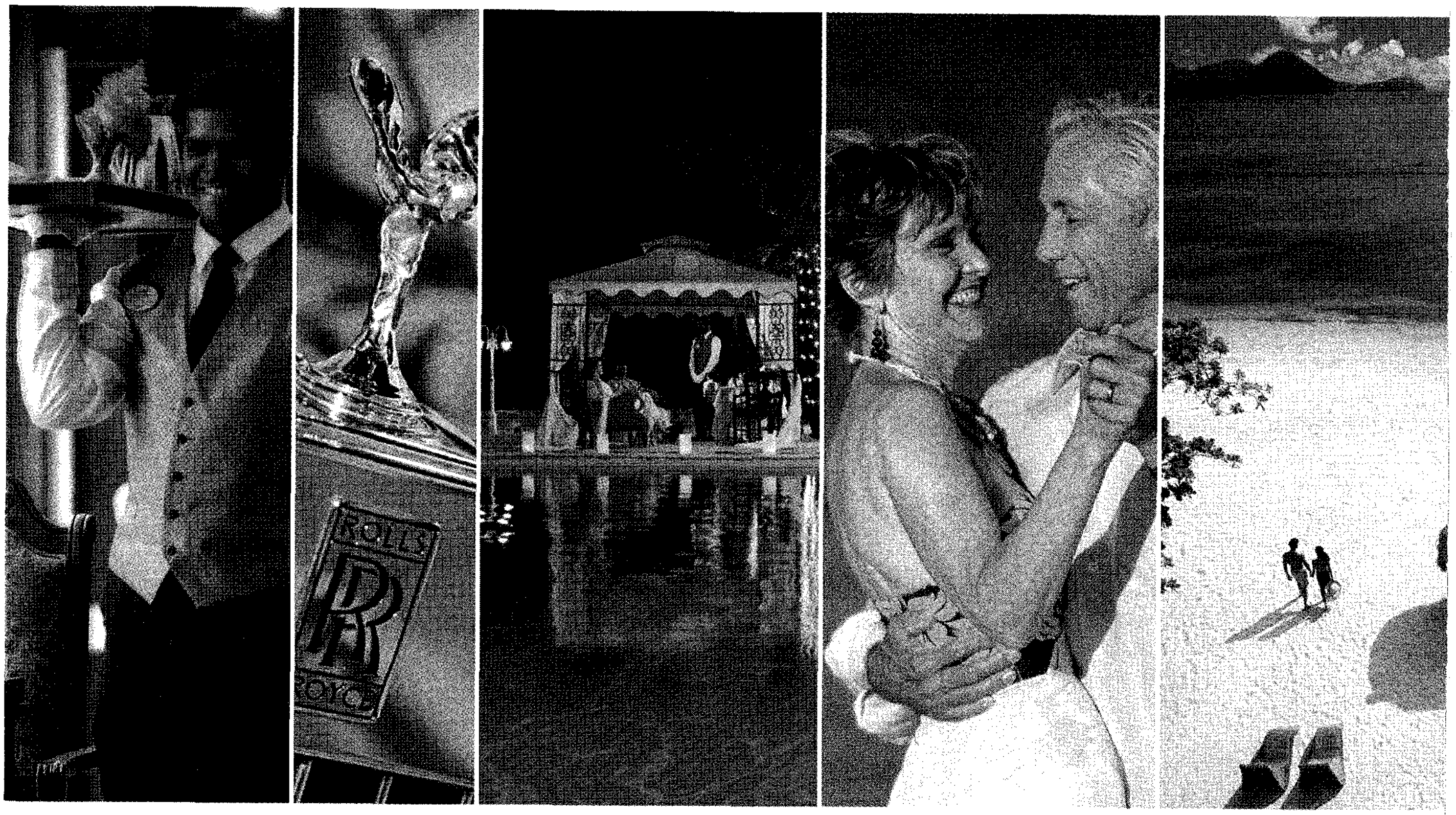

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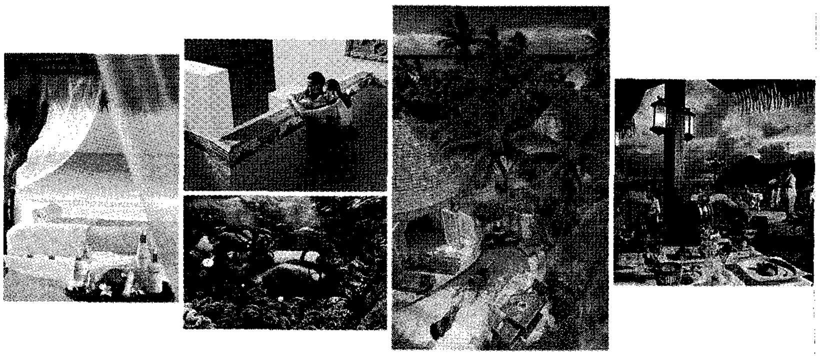

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the seeds for the Airborne Toxic Event in “White Noise.”

As DeLillo matured as a writer, his detritus increased, and not just because his books got longer. Beginning with the manuscript of “The Names,” written in the early eighties, he began consistently to type each paragraph over and over, often on its own page, so that within a draft a paragraph may appear a dozen times on a dozen sheets, as he works it to his satisfaction. (The change occurs in Box 44, folders 1-3.) The process gives DeLillo’s drafts a highly deliberate pace, like a blind man tapping his way forward. It also confirms his appraisal of his own technique; in a 1997 letter to David Foster Wallace, he wrote that his prose is characterized by “a sensitivity to the actual appearance of words on a page, to letter-shapes and letter-combinations.” (DeLillo saved a copy of the letter.) He goes on, “At some point (in my writing life) I realized that precision can be a kind of poetry, and the more precise you try to be, or I try to be, the more simply and correctly responsive to what the world looks like—then the better my chances of creating a deeper and more beautiful language.” (In his response, Wallace wrote, “I found your comments on the physical architecture of clauses and words and letters real interesting and yet identified with them not one whit. I think I’m maybe 100% aural. My eyesight’s really bad anyway.”)

The painstaking nature of DeLillo’s method can be seen in his drafts for “Underworld” (2001), which began as a novella, “Pafko at the Wall,” composed in 1991. He goes through a dozen pages to settle on the language of the opening two paragraphs, in which a Harlem teen-ager named Cotter Martin gets ready to jump the turnstile at the Polo Grounds to see the famous 1951 Dodgers-Giants playoff game. The first page in the folder already captures the agitated mentality of a hurrying city: “It’s a school day, sure, but he’s nowhere near the classroom. The longing to be here, standing in the shadow of this old rust-hulk of a structure, is too hard to resist—this metropolis.” DeLillo breaks off and starts again: “It’s a school day, sure, but he’s nowhere near the classroom, the box of forty blank faces.” He pauses, then alters the image to “the box of forty mismatched heads.” He returns to his original riff: “It’s a school day, sure, but he’s nowhere near the classroom and it’s not a matter of midweek blues.” Then he drops “midweek blues,” but introduces the idea of melancholy in a lovely pair of sentences: “Most longings go unfulfilled. This is the word’s wistful implication.” He transforms these two sentences into one: “Longing on a large scale is what makes history.”

Five years later, DeLillo turns to these words again, for the prologue to “Underworld.” He wants a new first paragraph to precede the earlier one. “Look at the kid with the empty pockets” becomes “Look at the kid with the lively eyes”; he then changes “lively eyes” to “glimmerglass eyes.” (Glimmerglass eyes? He amends it in pencil: “shine in his eyes.”) A few pages later, he returns to the image: “He speaks in your voice, American, and has a shine in his eyes that’s half hope, half fear.” DeLillo replaces the end of the sentence with the smoother “halfway hopeful.” After a few more tweaks, he has merged Bellow with Gershwin: “He speaks in your voice, American, and there’s a shine in his eye that’s halfway hopeful. It’s a school day, sure, but he’s nowhere near the classroom. He wants to be here instead, standing in the shadow of this old rust-hulk of a structure, and it’s hard to blame him—this metropolis of steel and concrete and flaky paint and cropped grass and enormous Chesterfield packs aslant on the scoreboards, a couple of cigarettes jutting from each. Longing on a large scale is what makes history.”

In a letter to his agent, DeLillo calls one of his notebooks “exquisite scribblings.” For “Underworld,” DeLillo kept three sets of notes. First, there are loose bits of paper that the archivists have tucked into Mylar sleeves. (One piece is ripped from a supermarket bag; an idea struck DeLillo on his way home from shopping.) Many of these scraps contain aphorisms that ended up in the book: “All waste aspires to the condition of shit.” Then, there are pocket notebooks that DeLillo labelled with subject headings, such as “The Game” and “Black-and-White Ball.” Finally, there are two spiral-bound notebooks where DeLillo lets his consciousness expand. On one page, he writes, “The Factoids: Nobody knows whether they in fact exist.” Then, “By the end of the novel, it is suggested that *everyone* is a

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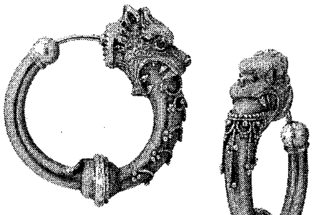

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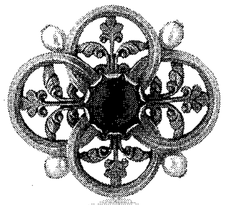

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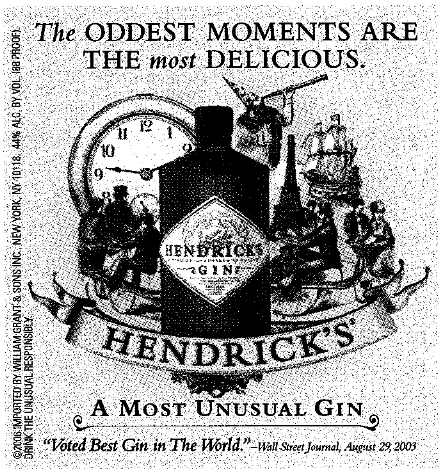
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HECKLERS ON POETRY NIGHT

• •

Factoid, a rumored version of himself." He lets this thought unspool. "The existence of the Factoids explains everything from the Kennedy assassination onward—Vietnam, Watergate, etc. Did Factoids kill JFK? Or was JFK a Factoid—found out and murdered. Truman Capote's Black-and-White ball (a factoid confection)."

DeLillo's letters are often about business—negotiations over contracts, responses to translators—but a few of them provide insight into his austere approach to the literary life. One, in particular, is the kind of note that biographers long to stumble across. In October, 1995, David Foster Wallace wrote to him, "Because I tend both to think I'm uniquely afflicted and to idealize people I admire, I tend to imagine you never having had to struggle with any of this narcissism or indulgence stuff. . . . Maybe I want a pep-talk, because I have to tell you I don't enjoy this war one bit." DeLillo responded in November. "I was a semiconscious writer in the beginning," he writes. "Just sat and wrote something, or read the newspaper, or went to the movies. Over time I began to understand, one, that I was lucky to be doing this work, and, two, that the only way I'd get better at it was to be more serious, to understand the rigors of novel-writing and to make it central to my life, not a variation on some related career choice, like sportswriting or playwriting. The novel is different. . . . We die indoors, and alone, and I don't mean to sound overdramatic but you know what I'm talking about. Anyway, all of this happened over time, until eventually discipline no longer seemed something outside me that urged the reluctant body into the room. At this point discipline is inseparable from what I do. It's not even definable as discipline. It has no name. I never think about it. But there's no trick of meditation or self-mastery that brought it about. I got older, that's all. I was not a born novelist (if anyone is). I had to grow into novelhood."

One day last October, Tom Staley received a tip from a Canadian academic who had used the Ransom collection: a retired foreign correspondent named Bernard Diederich wanted to sell a hundred and thirty letters that Graham Greene had written to him. Diederich, who was born in New Zealand, was now living in Florida. Staley's friend Gene Cooke has a home in Florida—so, one day in January, the two men got into Cooke's gray Mercedes and headed down the South Dixie Highway. Staley had looked into Diederich's role in Greene's life and found that he was particularly close to Greene during the nineteen-sixties, when Greene was in Haiti researching his great novel "The Comedians."

Greene's writing, popular in life, is coveted in death. Three major archives have his work: Boston College, Georgetown University, and the University of Texas. The last two, especially, compete for what little material remains in private hands. Staley, who had called Diederich promptly to arrange the Florida visit, was coming off two related successes. He had recently bought two hundred and fifteen letters of Greene's, from a collector in Finland; in one of the letters, Greene writes that "The Heart of the Matter" is "one of my chief failures." Staley had also acquired Greene's F.B.I. file, from a British bookseller, which revealed, among other things, that real spies weren't much more competent than the ones he made up in "Our Man in Havana." (The agents confused Greene with a man named Thomas Graham Greene.)

Just south of Coral Gables, Staley and Cooke pulled off the road. At a café inside a Barnes & Noble bookstore, Staley sized up Diederich. "I want him to know how valuable this is for Greene and posterity," he told Cooke. "One bad thing—he wants to give the money to a Jesuit school. He's going to want real money." Staley then took out a list of questions that he had written down: points that needed satisfying, if he was to make an offer. "You have to remember it's not checkers, it's chess," he told me.

Greene, he went on, was in the habit of having his sister type his letters. If she had typed the ones sent to Diederich, they would be worth less. "The more the author's involved, the better," Staley explained. (Of greatest interest of all are handwritten letters; cross-outs illuminate the writer's mind.) Greene also had a habit of writing very impersonal notes. He did not trust many people and gave little away to most correspondents. " 'Meet me for dinner' is very different from 'My work isn't going well,' " Staley pointed out.

The period that Diederich's letters covered—from the mid-sixties until 1991, the date of Greene's death—is less well documented than others in Greene's life. Diederich had stopped

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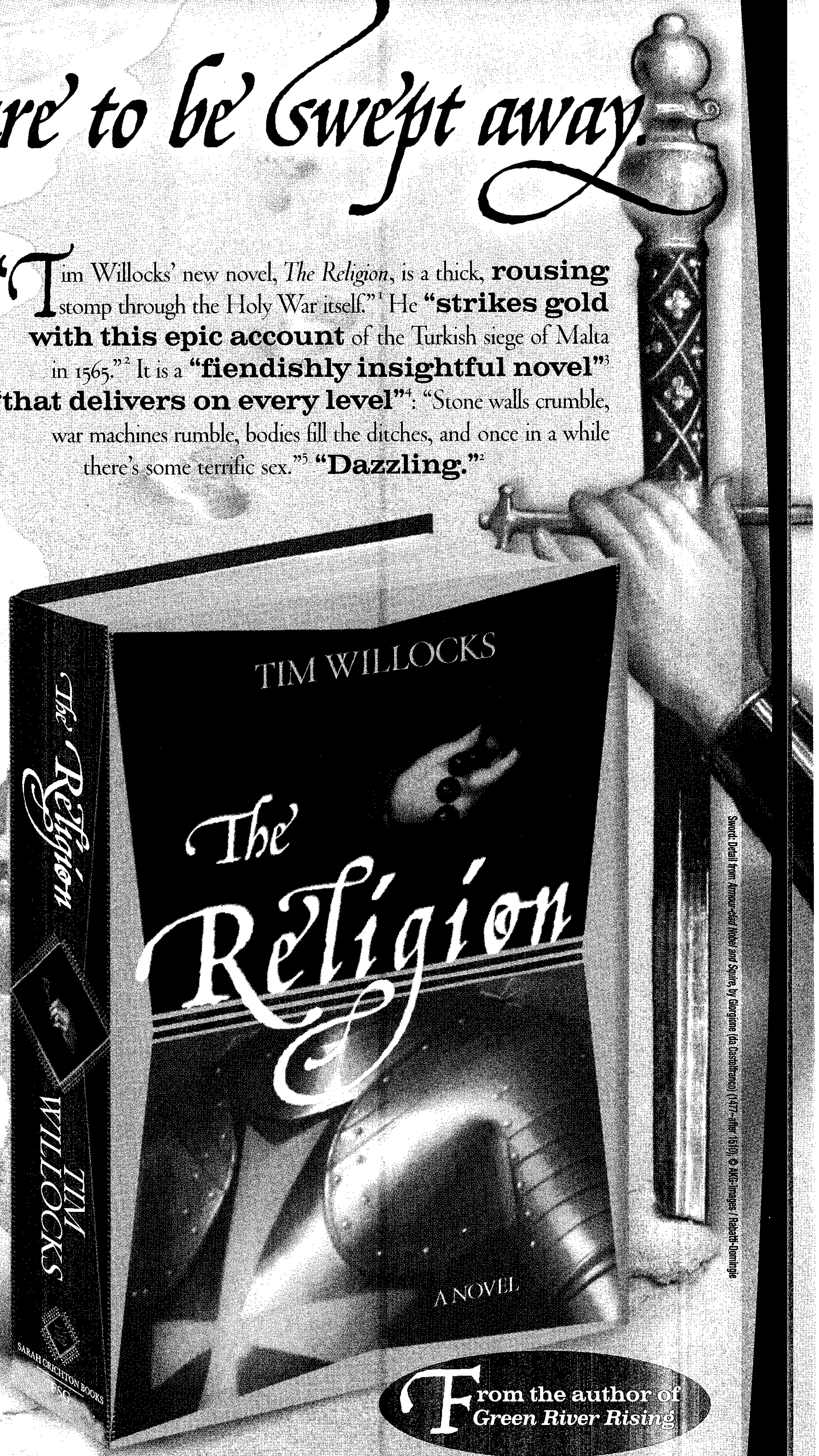

Sword: Detail from *Armour-clad Noble and Squire*, by Giorgione (da Castelfranco) (1477–after 1510) © AKG-images / Rabatti-Domingie

From the author of *Green River Rising*

1. Julie Drew, *The Plain Dealer* (Cleveland)
2. *Publishers Weekly* (starred review)
3. Tim Davis, *Bookpage*
4. Curt Schleier, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*
5. *Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)
6. Clayton Moore, *Bookslut*
7. Joseph Eagan, *Library Journal* (starred review)

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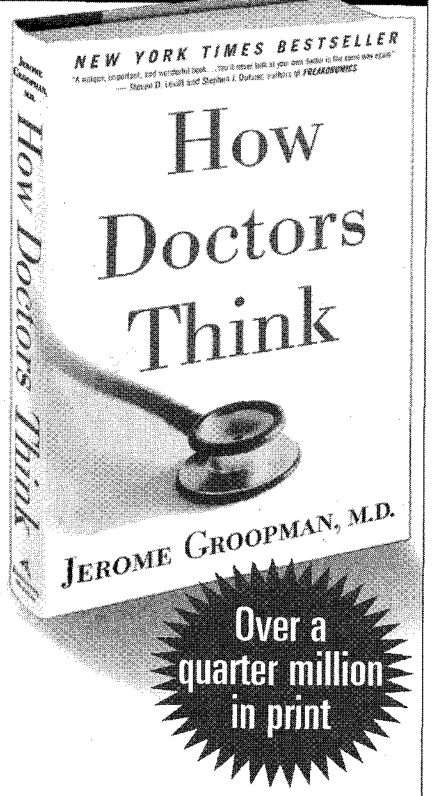
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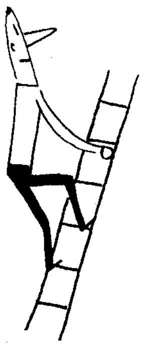
coöperating with Greene's most prominent biographer, Norman Sherry, after Sherry published the first volume of his three-part study, because he thought him unreliable and too focussed on Greene's sex life. Diederich, Staley said, could be an important new source on Greene's final decades.

Staley's conversation with Diederich would help him figure out how well Diederich really knew Greene—giving context to the words on paper. "We're going to be absolutely vacant," Staley instructed Cooke. "We just want to ask him about Greene, Greene, and Greene." Cooke promised that he would comply. "That's why you're wearing a green shirt," he joked. Staley was dressed in a shiny cotton button-down, gray slacks, and loafers.

Diederich, who is eighty, lived in a house in Pinecrest. He met Staley and Cooke in the driveway and walked them past palm trees and orchids to his door. Inside, the hallways were covered with colorful Haitian art. "That's my wife's great-great grandfather," Diederich said, pausing before an oil of Haiti's second President, Jean-Pierre Boyer. The art did not interest Staley, and he barely suppressed his impatience. Diederich finally led him into his office. On one wall, there was a photograph of him and Greene from 1977; flanked by palm trees, they held highball glasses in their hands. Alcohol was a part of the dispute with Sherry, who had written that Diederich and Greene drank whiskey together in Panama. "Only local toffs would drink whiskey," Diederich told me. "We drank rum."

Diederich had thick white hair, a full beard, and the gravelly voice of Sean Connery. He would not be easy to manipulate. "Here they are," he said, pushing two green folders across his large oak desk, toward Staley.



Staley has bought so many literary archives that he can practically gauge them by feel; when looking at one, he maintains a neutral face. He asked Diederich about Greene while flipping through the letters.

"When did you first meet Greene?"

"In '54."

"And this is your first letter—'65?"

"No, there are others I lost."

"You lost them . . ."

"We moved around a lot. When I was kicked out of Haiti, I never visited my office again. I went directly from my office to jail and from jail to the airport."

Diederich told war stories, most of which centered on how much he and Greene liked to drink. Staley asked Diederich about rum punch, which prompted a long story about "the old guy César" at the Grand Hotel Oloffson, in Port-au-Prince, whom Greene thought made the best one. "It was a special rum punch with Haitian rum and orange juice, and a little bit of Myers. Graham loved his rum punch—tough stuff." He told of a disastrous trip that he and Greene had taken to try to find the casket of Sir Francis Drake, who died off the coast of Panama in 1596. Panama's strongman leader, Omar Torrijos, a friend of Greene's, lent them a military helicopter, but the pilot took them to the wrong beach. Diederich chuckled at the memory. "Graham was very good company," he said. Referring to claims that Greene was manic-depressive, he said, "The bipolar thing I could never understand, because all the years I knew him there was never any swing."

As Diederich talked, Staley leafed through the letters, each in its own plastic sleeve. When Diederich digressed, and began to speak of his children and their own journalistic efforts, Staley quietly tapped his hand against his chair. He put a mint in his mouth and sucked on it hard. At one point, Staley's cell phone rang. He took the call and left the room. "That was Bob Woodward," he said pointedly, upon returning. The University of Texas, he told Diederich, was planning a symposium at the Ransom with Woodward and Bernstein. Diederich, who was once placed in solitary confinement by Papa Doc Duvalier for his reporting in Haiti, did not respond to this news.

Staley went back to listening and leafing. He noticed that all but one of the letters were typed, and that most of the letters from the sixties were missing. Diederich had correspondence mainly from the seventies and eighties—the period of Greene's decline, when he wrote

"The Honorary Consul," "Monsignor Quixote," and other lesser works. ("Graham loved 'The Honorary Consul,'" Diederich pointed out.) For many biographers, however, decline is as interesting as anything else, and the letters were personal—rare for Greene's later days. "So many of Greene's letters are so guarded," Staley told me later. "He saw the C.I.A. in everything, or MI6. These are *not* guarded. Diederich was a friend." In one letter, Greene writes excitedly that his trip to Panama with Diederich has inspired a book: "I really believe a novel is emerging into my self-conscious." And then disappointment: "I started the novel in Capri and wrote 6000 words but I am doubtful whether it will work." In the final months of his life, the normally undemonstrative Greene, then eighty-six years old, sent Diederich a note asking for a visit. "I always felt bad about that," Diederich told Staley. "But I had so much work."

Greene's opposition to American foreign policy is in the letters, too. In 1977, after the United States signed the treaty returning sovereignty over the Panama Canal to Panama, Greene predicted grim consequences for General Torrijos: "300 square miles and more of real estate plus a lot of money will be a big temptation to the bourgeoisie. They won't like the idea of the general spending it on school meals, free milk and pleasure grounds for children. I think the general's life might well be in danger." Torrijos died four years later, when the airplane he was flying in crashed; Greene always believed that he was assassinated.

"These are great letters," Staley finally told Diederich. "They are far more revealing than most letters he wrote to other people." Staley decided that he wanted them, and asked Cooke and me to leave the room. He had already resolved to offer eighty-five thousand dollars, and to go as high as a hundred and thirty thousand if necessary. (The higher number amounted to a thousand dollars a letter, slightly higher than the going rate for Greene.) To make the bid, Staley had lined up a forty-thousand-dollar gift in Austin; the rest would come from the archive's general fund.

He asked Diederich whether he had got the letters appraised or given any thought about their value. Diederich invited him to make him an offer—and added that Staley had a competitor. The director of acquisitions at Georgetown was coming to Pinecrest in a week.

Staley was nonplussed for a moment. He then reminded Diederich that Georgetown had given Norman Sherry—his nemesis—exclusive access to Greene's letters in its collection. The arrangement had been controversial, even in Greene's family. "You know the issues of them being in bed with Sherry," Staley said. Diederich responded that he did. Staley then hinted that Diederich could publish his own memoir—rich in Greene reminiscences—under the Ransom Center's imprint. ("That's my kicker," Staley told me.)

The two men continued their discussion, but Diederich was unwilling to commit, and Staley left without a deal. But he was confident that things would eventually go his way. "Georgetown doesn't have that kind of money," he said.

A few months passed. "Diederich? Oh, I'll hear from him," Staley assured me. In May, he did: Diederich sold the archive to him for just forty-nine thousand two hundred dollars. Staley's comments about Georgetown and Sherry had clearly weighed on Diederich, and he even offered to throw in letters that Greene's companion Yvonne Cloetta had written to him, if Staley promised to keep them out of Sherry's hands. (Though Staley said that this would not be ethical, Diederich donated them anyway.) "Tom is a straight shooter and loves the letters he collects," Diederich explained to me in an e-mail.

Staley was happy with his hoard. "The letters are good—first class!" he said, adding, "And I got them at a very good price." He wasn't sorry that he had used every trick he had to beat Georgetown; the Ransom now had a new treasure. "I'm shameless," Staley had told me. "I'll try anything." ♦

From the Alexandria (La.) Town Talk.

Unless they do a nasal swap, Morocco said, he couldn't say if the cases were "true flu."

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SUMMER MOVIES

COMMANDO

To the untrained eye, the ravines near Lake Michigan really did look a little like a Central American jungle. In August, with the Midwest's tropical humidity and a little suspension of disbelief, those dense forests could pass for Nicaragua—at least enough for our purposes. We were twelve, thirteen years old, we had just seen "First Blood," or "Raiders of the Lost Ark," and we wanted to re-create the movie, or at least the spirit of it—of hunting and being hunted. Within hours of leaving the theatre, we would put on our fatigues (we called them "camos"), throw our weapons and accessories in our backpacks, get on our bikes, and ride down to the ravines by the beach.

As I look back on it now, it's pretty clear that we would replicate anything we saw in a movie. Did every one of us know how to do Ralph Macchio's victory kick at the end of "The Karate Kid"? This goes without saying. After seeing "Breaking Away," did we, while riding at top speed, stick bicycle pumps into each other's spokes to see if this would indeed cause a horrific wipeout? Yes, and it did. The day after seeing "Enter the Ninja," we made our own crude and flightless Japanese throwing stars in metal shop (they weren't round, but they were sharp). Usually triggered by a movie that found new ways of depicting violence, with new equipment and in new settings—"The Road Warrior"!—we spent a good portion of our adolescent lives pretending to kill each other, pretending to break each other's arms and legs, pretending to maim, explode, murder, and die.

When we played Commando—we were calling it that even before the movie appeared—the throwing stars were among the many crucial accoutrements brought to the abandoned bridge that spanned the ravine's main gorge. There we hid our bikes and got outfitted in our various ways, doing our best heroes-strap-on-their-grenades-and-bandoliers montage. Among the six or seven of us, we all had the staple elements—Swiss Army knife, wrist rocket, eye black, as many bandannas as possible—so the equipment modifications and additions became key. I brought my homemade nunchaku (two long dowels tied together with a shoelace), wore the biking gloves I'd painted to look like Mel Gibson's, and taped a steak knife to my leg. (I always liked to have some kind of knife taped to my calf.)

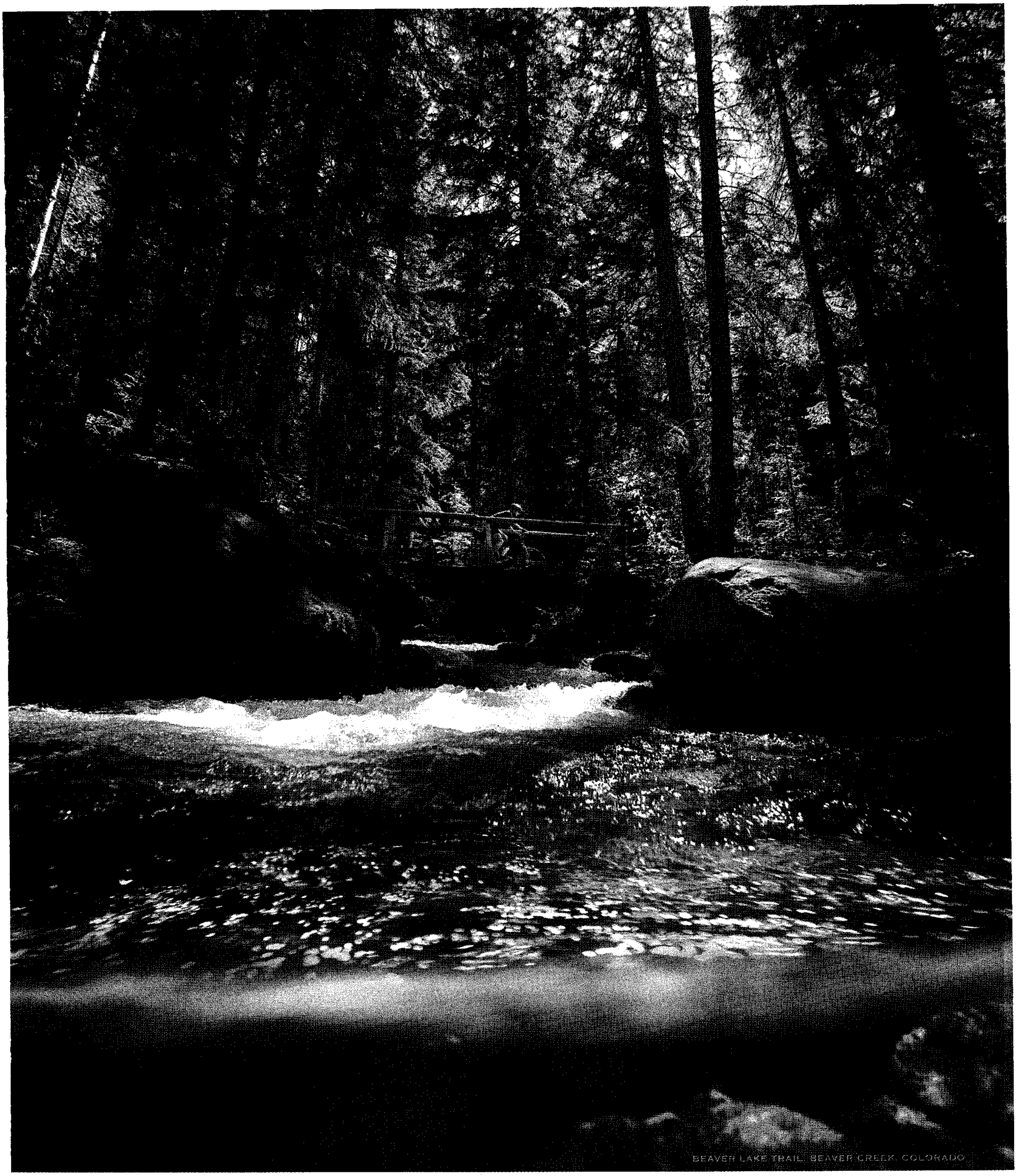
ZOHAR LAZAR

When everyone was ready, there would be the inevitable awkward pause when we realized, once again, that there was no clear objective to whatever we were about to do next. There were never teams or rules or objectives. Whenever someone would propose some structure—"Maybe there should be a flag or something that we try to capture?"—the idea would die a quick death. "Capture the flag?" would be the response. "That's for homos!" And that would be the end of that. We would descend into the ravine and fend for ourselves, alternately hiding and pursuing, tackling and being tackled, all the while trying not to get stabbed by the throwing stars in our pockets and the knife strapped to our legs.

During those hours, the danger was real enough. The ravines were sixty feet deep, and the stream that ran below was cold and rocky. Injuries occurred, and people were punched, and, with each step farther away from our regular lives and into the worlds we'd seen on film, we felt more like ourselves. We didn't think of those movies as escapist entertainments. The worlds they depicted didn't seem foreign or unattainable. Setting traps and running with a knife between your teeth, diving into a pit and emerging from a river, camouflaged in mud—all of it seemed far more natural, more in synch with the adrenaline that was coursing through our adolescent bodies, than anything else in our pedestrian existence. We'd cobble together an identity—a shoulder pad from "The Road Warrior," Rambo's sorry old Army jacket—and go looking for moments of violence. It didn't matter that our wars were poorly planned and lacked any exit strategy. It didn't matter that the only real enemy, in the end, was us. We would see these movies and think, *That's* my life. *That's* the life I'm meant to lead.

—*Dave Eggers*

Ten GRUELING MILES TO THE NEXT CHAI SOY MUD WRAP.



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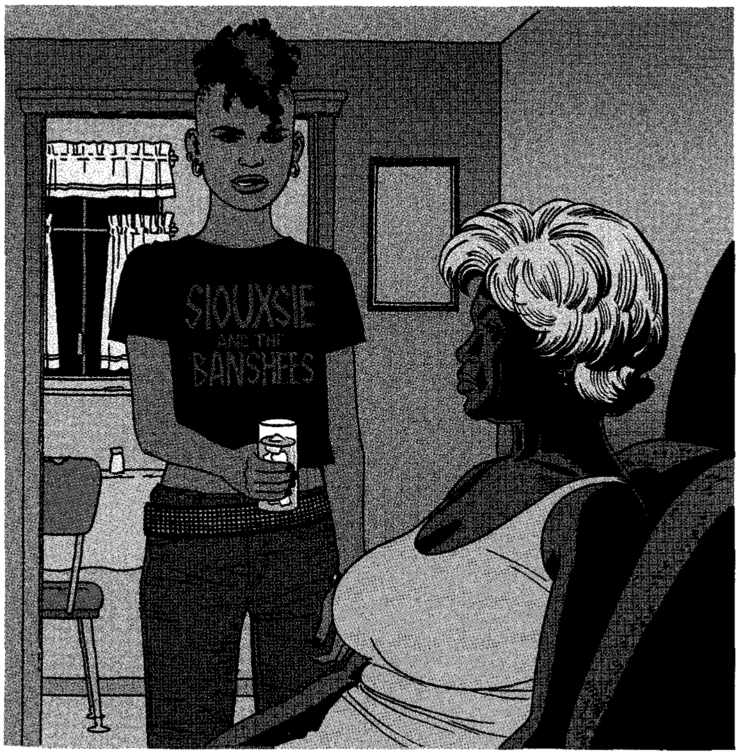

JAIME HERNANDEZ

It's never the changes we want that change everything.

This is how it all starts: with your mother calling you into the bathroom. You will remember what you were doing at that precise moment for the rest of your life: you were reading "Watership Down" and the bucks and their does were making the dash for the raft and you didn't want to stop reading, the book had to go back to your brother tomorrow, but then she called you again, louder, her I'm-not-fucking-around voice, and you mumbled irritably, Sí, señora.

She is standing in front of the medicine-cabinet mirror, naked from the waist up, her bra slung about her hips like a torn sail, the scar on her back as vast and inconsolable as the sea. You want to return to your book, to pretend you didn't hear her, but it is too late. Her eyes meet yours, the same big smoky eyes you will have in the future. Ven acá, she commands. She is frowning at something on one of her breasts.

Your mother's breasts are immensities. One of the wonders of the world. The only ones you've seen that are bigger are in nudie magazines or on really fat ladies. They're forty-two triple Ds and the aureoles are as big as saucers and black as pitch and at their edges are fierce hairs that sometimes she plucks and sometimes she doesn't. These breasts have always embarrassed you and when you walk in public with her you are conscious of them. After her face and her hair, her tetas are what she is most proud of. Your father could never get enough of them, she always brags. But given the fact that he ran off on her after their third year of marriage it seemed in the end that he could.

You dread conversations with your mother. These one-sided dressing-downs. You figure that she has called you in to give you another earful about your diet. Your mom's convinced that if you only eat more plátanos you will suddenly acquire her extraordinary train-wrecking secondary sex characteristics. Even at that age you are nothing if not your mother's daughter. You are twelve years old and already as tall as her, a long slender-necked ibis of a girl. You have her straight hair, which makes you look more Hindu than Dominican, and a behind that the boys haven't been able to stop talking about since the fifth grade and whose appeal you do not yet understand. You have her complexion, too, which means you are dark as night. But for all your similarities the tides of inheritance have yet to reach your chest. You have only the slightest hint of breasts: from most angles you're flat as a board and you're thinking she's going to order you to stop wearing bras again because they're suffocating your potential breasts, discouraging them from popping out. You're ready to argue with her to the death, because you're as possessive of your bras as you are of the pads you now buy yourself.

But no, she doesn't say a word about eating more plátanos. Instead, she takes your right hand and guides you. Your mom is rough in all things, but this time she is gentle. You did not think her capable of it.

Do you feel that? she asks in her too familiar raspy voice.

At first all you feel is the density of the tissue and the heat of her, like a bread that never stopped rising. She kneads your fingers into her. You're as close as you've ever been and your breathing is what you hear.

Don't you feel that?

She turns toward you. Coño, muchacha, stop looking at me and feel.

So you close your eyes and your fingers are pushing down and you're thinking of Helen Keller and how when you were little you wanted to be her except more nunnish and then suddenly you do feel something. A knot just beneath her skin, tight and secre-

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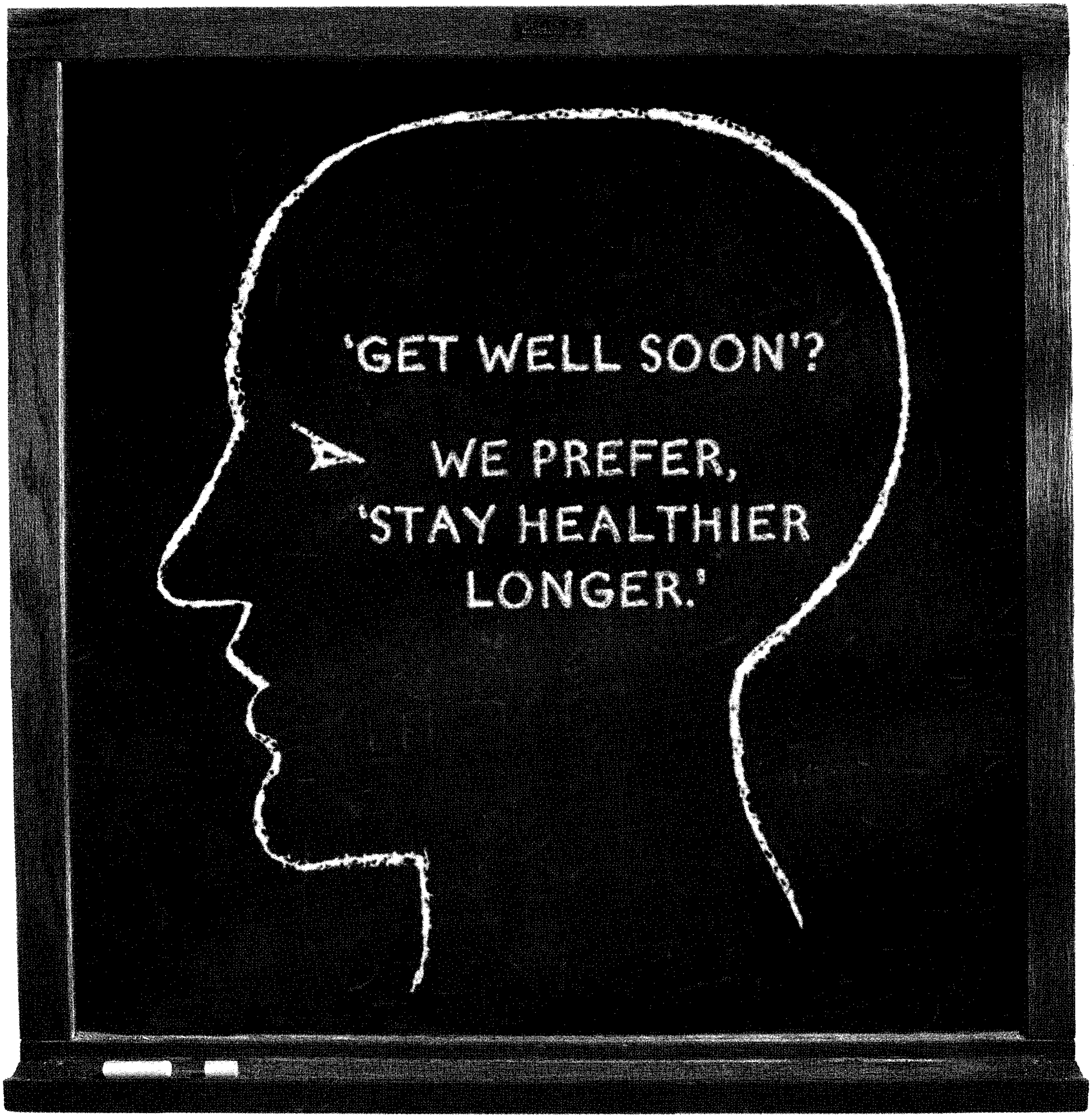

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THE BOWERBIRDS

As if we were leaving
the small forest tower that we built,
with a moss carpet and mosquito chandeliers,
and laughing at it.
I can't believe you used that word—
in an argument, no less.
But we would never break this way,
loose, affectionate, wry.
You straighten,
add an ornament.
This is somehow part of our staying.
If you left, a black cape would flap
like a crow winging,
and I would make a hundred harried calls.

—*Dana Goodyear*

tive as a plot. And at that moment, for reasons you will never quite understand, you are overcome by the feeling, the premonition, that something in your life is about to change. You become light-headed and you can feel a throbbing in your blood, a rhythm, a drum. Bright lights zoom through you like photon torpedoes, like comets. You don't know how or why you know this thing, but that you know it cannot be doubted. It is exhilarating. For as long as you've been alive you've had bruja ways; even your mother will not begrudge you that much. Hija de Liborio, she called you after you picked your tía's winning numbers for her and when you guessed correctly how old to the day she'd been when she left home for the U.S. (a fact she'd never told anyone). You assumed Liborio was a relative. That was before Santo Domingo, before you knew about the Great Power of God.

I feel it, you say, too loudly. Lo siento.

And like that, everything changes. Before the winter is out the doctors remove that breast you were kneading and its partner, along with the auxiliary lymph nodes. Because of the operations, your mother will have trouble lifting her arms over her head for the rest of her life. Her hair begins to fall out and one day she pulls it all out herself and puts it in a plastic bag. You change, too. Not right away, but it happens. And it's in that bathroom that it all begins. That you begin.

A punk chick. That's what I became. A Siouxsie and the Banshees-loving punk chick. The Puerto Rican kids on the block couldn't stop laughing when they saw my hair; they called me Blacula. And the morenos, they didn't know what to say; they just called me devil-bitch. Yo, devil-bitch, yo, *yo!* My tía Rubelka thought it was some kind of mental illness. Hija, she said while frying pastelitos, maybe you need *help*. But my mother was the worst. It's the last straw, she screamed. The. Last. Straw. But it always was with her. Mornings when I came downstairs she'd be in the kitchen making her coffee in la greca and listening to Radio WADO and when she saw me and my hair she'd get mad all over again, as if during the night she'd forgotten who I was.

My mother was one of the tallest women in Paterson and her anger was just as tall. It pincered you in its long arms, and if you showed any weakness you were finished. Que muchacha tan fea, she said in disgust, splashing the rest of her coffee in the sink. Fea had become my name. It was nothing new, to tell the truth. She'd been saying stuff like that all our lives. My mother would never win any awards, believe me. You could call her an absentee parent: if she wasn't at work she was sleeping and when she wasn't sleeping all she did was

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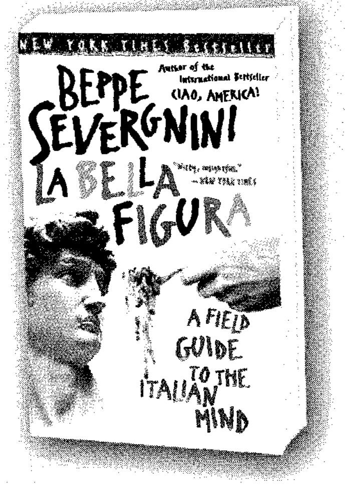
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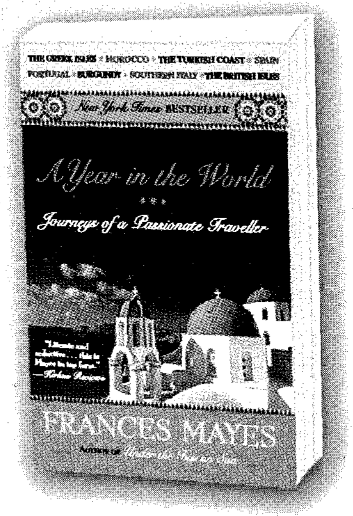
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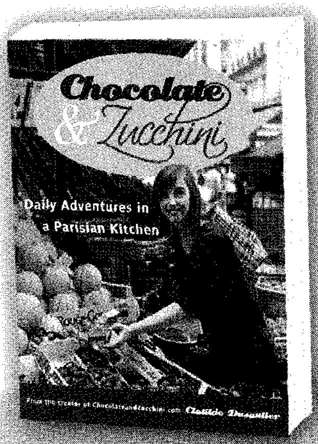
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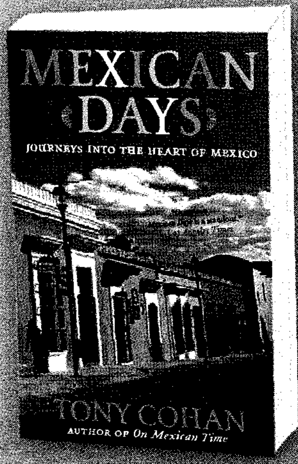
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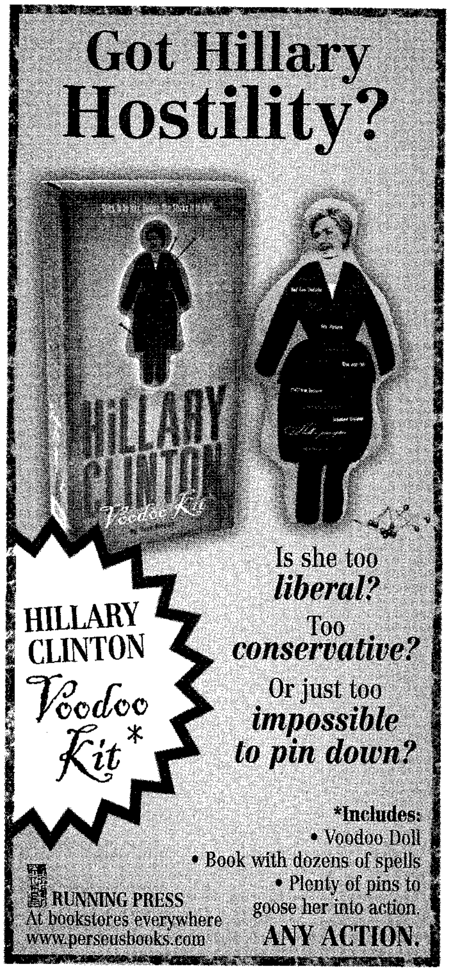
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scream and hit. As kids, me and Oscar were more scared of our mother than we were of the dark or el cuco. She would hit us anywhere, in front of anyone, always free with the chanclas and the correa, but now with her cancer there wasn't much she could do anymore. The last time she tried to whale on me it was because of my hair, but instead of cringing or running I punched her hand. It was a reflex more than anything, but once it happened I knew I couldn't take it back, not ever, and so I just kept my fist clenched, waiting for whatever came next, for her to attack me with her teeth like she had this one lady in the Pathmark. But she just stood there shaking, in her stupid wig and her stupid bata, with two huge foam prostheses in her bra, the smell of burning wig all around us. I almost felt sorry for her. This is how you treat your mother? she cried. And if I could I would have broken the entire length of my life across her face, but instead I screamed back, And this is how you treat your daughter?

Things had been bad between us all year. How could they not have been? She was my Old World Dominican mother who had come alone to the United States and I was her only daughter, the one she had raised up herself with the help of nobody, which meant it was her duty to keep me crushed under her heel. I was fourteen and desperate for my own patch of world that had nothing to do with her. I wanted the life that I used to see when I watched "Big Blue Marble" as a kid, the life that drove me to make pen pals and to borrow atlases from school. The life that existed beyond Paterson, beyond my family, beyond Spanish. And as soon as she became sick I saw my chance and I'm not going to pretend or apologize; I saw my chance and eventually I took it.

If you didn't grow up like I did then you don't know and if you don't know it's probably better you don't judge. You don't know the hold our mothers have on us, even the ones that are never around—*especially* the ones that are never around. What it's like to be the perfect Dominican daughter, which is just a nice way of saying a perfect Dominican slave. You don't know what it's like to grow up with a mother who never said anything that wasn't negative, who was always suspicious, always tearing you down and splitting your dreams straight down the seams. On TV and in books mothers talk to daughters, about life, about themselves, but on Main Street in Paterson mothers say not a word unless it's to hurt you. When my first pen pal, Tomoko, stopped writing me after three letters my mother was the one who said, You think someone's going to lose life writing to you? Of course I cried; I was eight and I had already planned that Tomoko and her family would adopt me. My mother, of course, saw clean into the marrow of those dreams and laughed. I wouldn't write to you, either, she said.

She was that kind of mother: who makes you doubt yourself, who would wipe you out if you let her. But I'm not going to pretend, either. For a long time I let her say what she wanted about me and, what was worse, for a long time I believed her. I was a fea, I was a worthless, I was an idiota. From ages two to thirteen I believed her and because I believed her I was the perfect hija. I was the one cooking, cleaning, doing the wash, buying groceries, writing letters to the bank to explain why a house payment was going to be late, translating. I had the best grades in my class. I never caused trouble, even when the morenas used to come after me with scissors because of my straight straight hair. I stayed at home and made sure my little brother Oscar was fed and everything ran right while she was at work. I raised him and I raised me. I was the one. You're my hija, she said, that's what you're supposed to be doing. When that thing happened to me when I was eight and I finally told her what our neighbor had done she told me to shut my mouth and stop crying and I did exactly that, I shut my mouth and clenched my legs and my mind and within a year I couldn't have told you what he looked like or even his name. All you do is complain, she said to me, but you have no idea what life really is. Sí, señora.

When she told me that I could go on my sixth-grade sleepaway to Bear Mountain and I bought a backpack with my own paper-route money and wrote Bobby Santos notes because he was promising to break into my cabin and kiss me in front of everyone I believed her and when on the morning of the trip she announced that I wasn't going and I said, But you promised, and she said, Muchacha del diablo, I promised you nothing, I didn't throw my backpack at her or pull out my hair, and when it was Laura Saenz who ended up kissing Bobby Santos, not me, I didn't say anything, either. I just lay in my room with stupid Bear-Bear and sang under my breath, imagining where I would run away to when I grew up. To Japan maybe, where I would track down Tomoko, or to Austria, where my singing would inspire a remake of "The Sound of Music."

All my favorite books from that period were about runaways—"Watership Down," "The Incredible Journey," "My Side of the Mountain"—and when Bon Jovi's "Runaway" came out I imagined it was me they were singing about. No one had any idea. I was the tallest, dorkiest girl in school, the one who dressed up as Wonder Woman every Halloween, the one who never said a word. People saw me in my glasses and my hand-me-down clothes and could not have imagined what I was capable of. And then when I was twelve I got that feeling, the scary witchy one, and before I knew it my mother was sick and the wildness that had been in me all along, that I had tried to tamp down with chores and with homework and with promises that once I reached college I would be able to do whatever I pleased, burst out. I couldn't help it. I tried to keep it down, but it just flooded through all my quiet spaces. It was a message more than a feeling, a message that tolled like a bell: Change, change, change.

It didn't happen overnight. Yes the wildness was in me, yes it kept my heart beating fast all the long day, yes it danced around me while I walked down the street, yes it let me look boys straight in the face when they stared at me, yes it turned my laugh from a cough into a wild fever, but I was still scared. How could I not be? I was my mother's daughter. Her hold on me was stronger than love. And then one day I was walking home with Karen Cepeda, who at that time was my friend. Karen did the goth thing really well; she had spiky Robert Smith hair and wore all black and had the skin color of a ghost. Walking with her in Paterson was like walking with the bearded lady. Everybody would stare and it was the scariest thing and that was, I guess, why I did it.

We were walking down Main and being glared at by everybody and out of nowhere I said, Karen, I want you to cut my hair. As soon as I said it I knew. The feeling in my blood, the rattle, came over me again. Karen raised her eyebrow: What about your mother? You see, it wasn't just me—everybody was scared of Belicia de León.

Fuck her, I said.

Karen looked at me like I was being stupid—I never cursed, but that was something else that was about to change. The next day we locked ourselves in her bathroom while downstairs her father and uncles were bellowing at some soccer game. Well, how do you want it? she asked. I looked at the girl in the mirror for a long time. All I knew was that I didn't want to see her ever again. I put the clippers in Karen's hand, turned them on, and guided her hand until it was all gone.

So now you're punk? Karen asked uncertainly.

Yes, I said.

The next day my mother threw the wig at me. You're going to wear this. You're going to wear it every day. And if I see you without it on I'm going to kill you!

I didn't say a word. I held the wig over the burner.

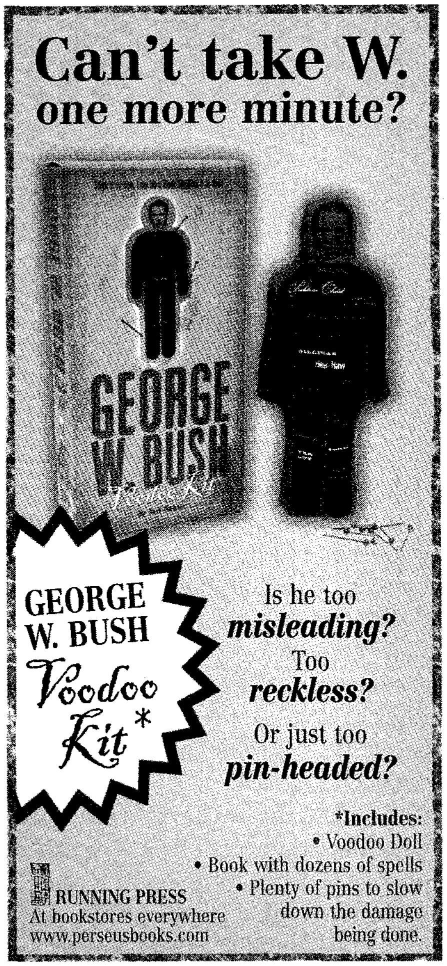
Don't do it, she said as the burner clicked. Don't you dare—

It went up in a flash, like gasoline, like a stupid hope, and if I hadn't thrown it in the sink it would have taken my hand. The smell was horrible, like all the chemicals from all the factories in Elizabeth.

That was when she slapped at me, when I struck her hand and she snatched it back, like I was the fire.

Of course everyone thought I was the worst daughter ever. My tía and our neighbors kept saying, Hija, she's your mother, she's dying, but I wouldn't listen. When I hit her hand, a door opened. And I wasn't about to turn my back on it.

But God how we fought! Sick or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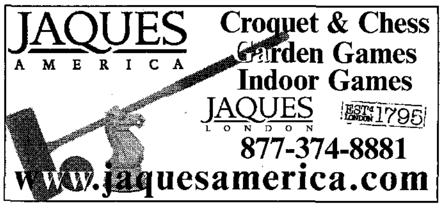
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not, dying or not, my mother wasn't going to go down easy. She wasn't una pendeja. I'd seen her slap grown men, push white police officers onto their asses, curse a whole group of bochincheras. She had raised me and my brother by herself, she had worked three jobs until she could buy this house we lived in, she had survived being abandoned by my father, she had come from Santo Domingo all by herself, and as a young girl she'd been beaten, set on fire, left for dead. (This last part she didn't tell me, my tía Rubelka did, in a whisper, Your mother almost died, she almost died, and when I asked my mother about it at dinner she took my dinner and gave it to my brother.) That was my mother and there was no way she was going to let me go without killing me first. Figurín de mierda, she called me. You think you're someone, but you ain't nada.

She dug hard, looking for my seams, wanting me to tear like always, but I didn't, I wasn't going to. It was that feeling I had that my life was waiting for me on the other side that made me fearless. When she threw away my Smiths and Sisters of Mercy posters—aquí yo no quiero maricones—I bought replacements. When she threatened to rip up my new clothes I started keeping them in my locker and at Karen's house. When she told me that I had to quit my job at the Greek diner I explained to my boss that my mother was starting to lose it because of her chemo, and when she called to say I couldn't work there anymore he just handed me the phone and stared out at his customers in embarrassment. When she changed the locks on me—I had started staying out late, going to the Limelight because even though I was fourteen I looked twenty-five—I would knock on Oscar's window and he would let me in, scared because the next day my mother would run around the house screaming, Who the hell let that hija de la gran puta in the house? Who? Who? And Oscar would be at the breakfast table stammering, I don't know, Mami, I don't.

Her rage filled the house, like flat stale smoke. It got into everything, into our hair and our food, like the fallout they told us about in school that would one day drift down soft as snow. My brother didn't know what to do. He stayed in his room, though sometimes he would lamely try to ask me what was going on. Nothing. You can tell me, Lola, he said, and I could only laugh. You need to lose weight, I told him.

In those final weeks I knew better than to go near my mother. Most of the time she just looked at me with the stink eye, but sometimes without warning she would grab me by my throat and hang on until I pried her fingers off. She didn't bother talking to me unless it was to make death threats: When you grow up you'll meet me in a dark alley when you least expect it and then I'll kill you and nobody will know I did it! Gloating as she said this.

You're crazy, I told her.

You don't call me crazy, she said, and then she sat down panting.

It was bad, but no one expected what came next. So obvious when you think about it.

All my life I'd been swearing that one day I would just disappear.

And one day I did.

I ran off, dique, because of a boy.

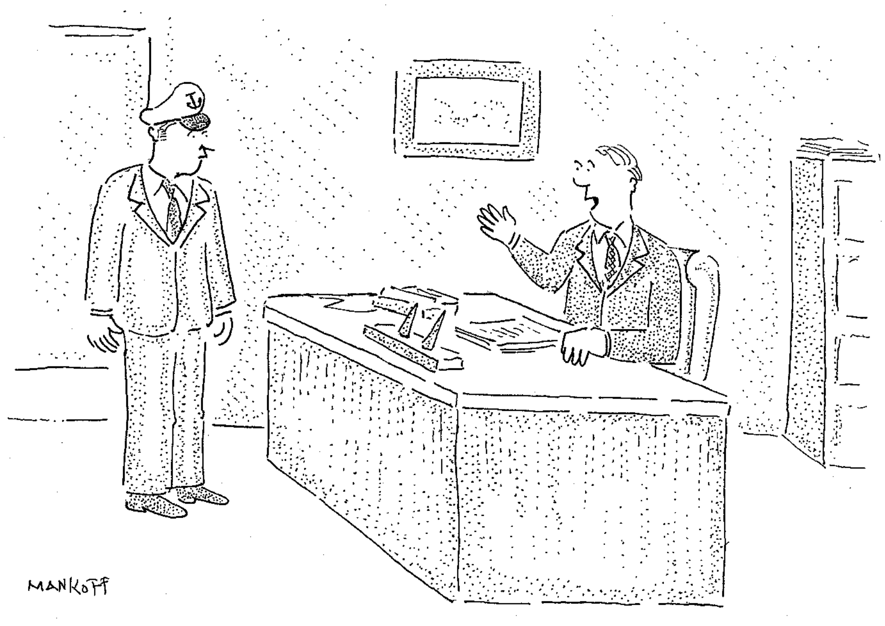
What can I really tell you about him? He was like all boys: beautiful and callow and, like an insect, he couldn't sit still. Un blanquito with long hairy legs who I met one night at the Limelight.

His name was Aldo.

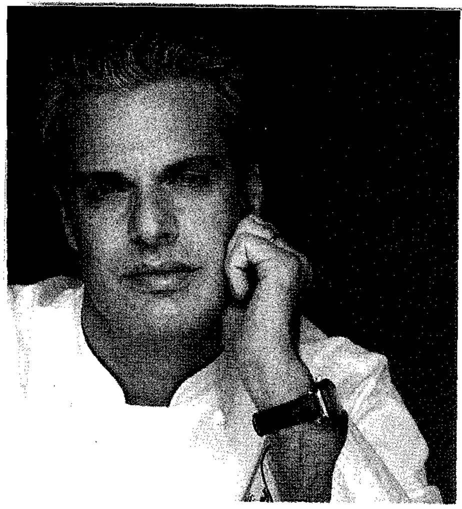
He was nineteen and lived down at the Jersey Shore with his seventy-four-year-old father. In the back of his Oldsmobile on University I pulled my leather skirt up and my fishnet stockings down and the smell of me was everywhere. I didn't let him go all the way, but still. The spring of my sophomore year we wrote and called each other at least once a day. I even drove down with Karen to visit him in Wildwood (she had a license, I didn't). He lived and worked near the boardwalk, one of three guys who operated the bumper cars, the only one without tattoos. You should stay, he told me that night while Karen walked ahead of us on the beach. Where would I live? I asked, and he smiled. With me. Don't lie, I said, but he looked out at the surf. I want you to come, he said seriously.

He asked me three times. I counted, I know.

That summer my brother announced that he was going to dedicate his life to designing role-playing games, and my mother was trying to keep a second job for the first time since her operation. It wasn't working out. She was coming home exhausted, and since I wasn't helping, nothing around the house was getting done. Some weekends my tía Rubelka would help out with the cooking and cleaning and would lecture us both, but she had her own family to look after, so most of the time we were



"Look, if you must go down to the seas again, to the lonely seas and sky, then go! But take your BlackBerry."



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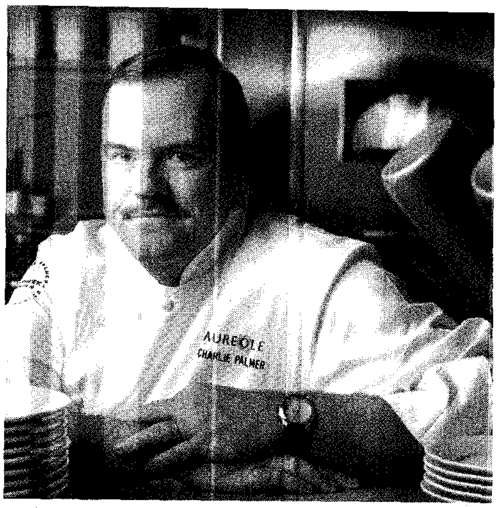

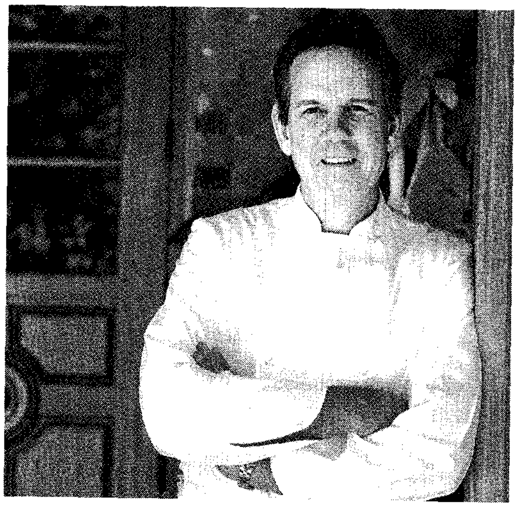

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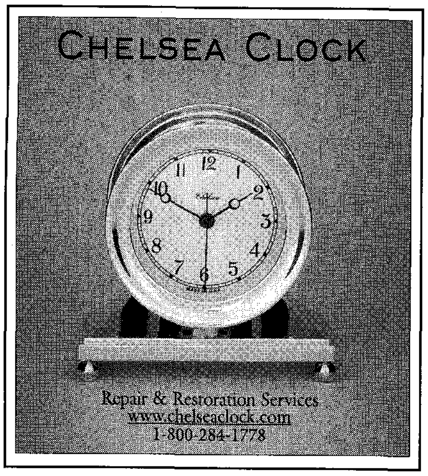

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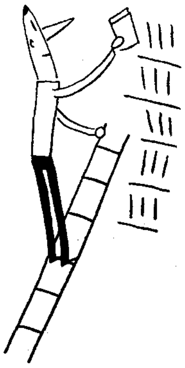
on our own. Come, he said on the phone. And then in August Karen left for Slippery Rock. She had graduated from high school a year early. If I don't see Paterson again it will be too soon, she said before she left. Five days later, school started. I cut class six times in the first two weeks. I just couldn't do school anymore. Something inside wouldn't let me. It didn't help that I was reading "The Fountainhead" and had decided that I was Dominique and Aldo was Roark. And finally what we'd all been waiting for happened. My mother announced at dinner, quietly, I want you both to listen to me: the doctor is running more tests on me.



Oscar looked like he was going to cry. He put his head down. And my reaction? I looked at her and said, Could you please pass the salt?

These days I don't blame her for smacking me across my face, but right then it was all I needed. We jumped on each other and the table fell and the sancocho spilled all over the floor and Oscar just stood in the corner bellowing, Stop it, stop it, stop it!

Hija de tu maldita madre! she shrieked. And I said, This time I hope you die from it.

For a couple of days the house was a war zone, and then on Friday she let me out of my room and I was allowed to sit next to her on the sofa and watch novelas with her. She was waiting for her blood work to come back, but you would never have known her life was in the balance. She watched the TV like it was the only thing that mattered, and whenever one of the characters did something underhanded she would start waving her arms: Someone has to stop her! Can't they see what that puta is up to?

I hate you, I said very quietly, but she didn't hear.

Go get me some water, she said. Put an ice cube in it.

That was the last thing I did for her. The next morning I was on the bus bound for the shore. One bag, two hundred dollars in tips, Tío Rudolfo's old knife, and the only picture my mother had of my father, which she had hidden under her bed (she was in the picture, too, but I pretended not to notice). I was so scared. I couldn't stop shaking. The whole ride down I was expecting the sky to split open and my mother to reach down and shake me. But it didn't happen. Nobody but the man across the aisle noticed me. You're really beautiful, he said. Like a girl I once knew.

I didn't write them a note. That's how much I hated them. Her.

That night while Aldo and I lay in his sweltering kitty-litter-infested room I told him: I want you to do it to me.

He started unbuttoning my pants. Are you sure?

Definitely, I said grimly.

He had a long thin dick that hurt like hell, but the whole time I just said, Oh yes, Aldo, yes, because that was what I imagined you were supposed to say while you were losing your virginity to some boy you thought you loved.

It was like the stupidest thing I ever did. I was miserable. And so bored. But of course I wouldn't admit it. I had run away, so I was happy! Happy!

Aldo had neglected to mention, all those times he asked me to live with him, that his father hated him like I hated my mother. Aldo, Sr., had been in the Second World War and he'd never forgiven the "Japs" for all the friends he had lost. My dad's so full of shit, Aldo said. He never left Fort Dix. I don't think his father said nine words to me the whole time I lived with them. He was one mean viejito and even had a padlock on the refrigerator. Stay the hell out of it, he told me. We couldn't even get ice cubes out.

Aldo and his dad lived in one of the cheapest little bungalows on New Jersey Avenue, and me and Aldo slept in a room where his father kept the litter box for his two cats, and at night we would move it out into the hallway, but he always woke up before us and put it back in the room: I told you to leave my crap alone! Which is funny when you think about it. But it wasn't funny then. I got a job selling French fries on the boardwalk and between the hot oil and the cat piss I couldn't smell anything else. On my days off I would drink with Aldo or I would sit in the sand dressed in all black and try to write in my journal, which I was sure would form the foundation for a utopian society after we blew ourselves into radioactive kibble. Sometimes boys would walk up to me and throw lines at me like, Who fuckin' died? They would sit down next to me in the sand. You a good-looking girl, you should be in a bikini. Why, so you can rape me? Jesus Christ, one of them said, jumping to his feet. What the hell is wrong with you?

To this day I don't know how I lasted. At the beginning of October I was laid off from the French-fry palace; by then most of the boardwalk was closed up and I had nothing to do except hang out at the public library, which was even smaller than my high-school one. Aldo had moved on to working with his dad at his garage, which only made them more pissed off at each other and by extension more pissed off at me. When they got home they would drink Schlitz and complain about the Phillies. I guess I should count myself lucky that they didn't decide to bury the hatchet by gangbanging me. I stayed out as much as I could and waited for the feeling to come back to me, to tell me what I should do next, but I was bone dry, bereft, no visions whatsoever. I started to think that maybe it was like in the books: as soon as I lost my virginity I lost my power. I got really mad at Aldo after that. You're a drunk, I told him. And an idiot. So what, he shot back. Your pussy smells. Then stay out of it! I will!

But of course I was happy! Happy! I kept waiting to run into my family posting flyers of me on the boardwalk—my mom, the tallest blackest chestiest thing in sight, Oscar looking like the Brown Blob, my tía Rubelka, maybe even my tío if they could get him off the heroin long enough—but the closest I came to any of that was some flyers someone had put up for a lost cat. That's white people for you. They lose a cat and it's an all-points bulletin, but we Dominicans lose a daughter and we might not even cancel our appointment at the salon.

By November I was so finished. I would sit there with Aldo and his putrid father and the old shows would come on the TV, the ones me and my brother used to watch when we were kids, "Three's Company," "What's Happening!!," "The Jeffersons," and my disappointment would grind against some organ that was very soft and tender. It was starting to get cold, too, and wind just walked right into the bungalow and got under your blankets or jumped in the shower with you. It was awful. I kept having these stupid visions of my brother trying to cook for himself. Don't ask me why. I was the one who cooked for us. The only thing Oscar knew how to make was grilled cheese. I imagined him thin as a reed, wandering around the kitchen, opening cabinets forlornly. I even started dreaming about my mother, except in my dreams she was young, my age, and it was because of those dreams that I realized something obvious: she had run away, too, and that was why we were all in the United States.

I put away the photo of her and my father, but the dreams didn't stop. I guess when a person is with you they're only with you when they're with you, but when they're gone, when they're really gone, they're with you forever.

And then at the end of November Aldo, my wonderful boyfriend, decided to be cute. I knew he was getting unhappy with us, but I didn't know exactly how bad it was until one night he had his friends over. His father had gone to Atlantic City and they were all drinking and smoking and telling dumb jokes and suddenly Aldo says, Do you know what Pontiac stands for? Poor Old Nigger Thinks It's A Cadillac. Who was he looking at when he told his punch line? He was looking straight at me.

That night he wanted me but I pushed his hand away. Don't touch me.

Don't get sore, he said, putting my hand on his cock. It wasn't nothing.

And then he laughed.

So what did I do a couple days later—a really dumb thing. I called home. The first time no one answered. The second time it was Oscar. The de León residence, how may I direct your call? That was my brother for you. This is why everybody in the world hated his guts.

It's me, dumb-ass.

Lola. He was so quiet and then I realized he was crying. Where *are* you?

You don't want to know. I switched ears, trying to keep my voice casual. How is everybody?

Lola, Mami's going to *kill* you.

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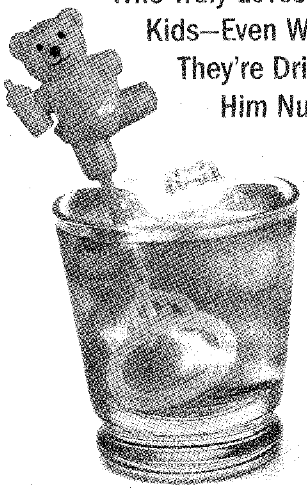

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Dumb-ass, could you keep your voice down. Mami isn't home, is she?

She's working.

What a surprise, I said. Mami working. On the last minute of the last hour of the last day my mother would be at work. She would be at work when the missiles were in the air.

I guess I must have missed him real bad or I just wanted to see somebody who knew anything about me, or the cat piss had damaged my common sense, because I gave him the address of a coffee shop on the boardwalk and told him to bring my clothes and some of my books.

Bring me money, too.

He paused. I don't know where Mami keeps it.

You know, Mister. Just bring it.

How much? he asked timidly.

All of it.

That's a lot of money, Lola.

Just bring me the money, Oscar.

O.K., O.K. He inhaled deeply. Will you at least tell me if you're O.K. or not?

I'm O.K., I said, and that was the only point in the conversation where I almost cried. I kept quiet until I could speak again and then I asked him how he was going to get down here without our mother finding out.

You know me, he said weakly. I might be a dork, but I'm a resourceful dork.

I should have known not to trust anybody whose favorite books as a child were Encyclopedia Brown. But I wasn't really thinking; I was so looking forward to seeing him.

By then I had this plan. I was going to convince my brother to run away with me. My plan was that we would go to Dublin. I had met a bunch of Irish guys on the boardwalk and they had sold me on their country. I would become a backup singer for U2 and both Bono and the drummer would fall in love with me, and Oscar could become the Dominican James Joyce. I really believed it would happen, too. That's how deluded I was by then.

The next day I walked into the coffee shop, looking brand-new, and he was there, with the bag. Oscar, I said, laughing. You're so fat!

I know, he said, ashamed. I was worried about you.

We embraced for like an hour and then he started crying. Lola, I'm sorry.

It's O.K., I said, and that's when I looked up and saw my mother and my tía Rubelka and my tío Rudolfo boiling out of the kitchen.

Oscar! I screamed, but it was too late. My mother already had me in her hands. She looked so thin and worn, almost like a hag, but she was holding on to me like I was her last nickel, and underneath her red wig her green eyes were *furious*. I noticed, absently, that she had dressed up for the occasion. That was typical. Muchacha del diablo, she shrieked. I managed to haul her out of the coffee shop and when she pulled back her hand to smack me I broke free. I ran for it. Behind me I could feel her sprawling, hitting the curb hard with a crack, but I wasn't looking back. No—I was running. In elementary school, whenever we had field day I was always the fastest girl in my grade, took home all the ribbons; they said it wasn't fair, because I was so big, but I didn't care. I could even have beaten the boys if I'd wanted to, so there was no way my sick mother, my messed-up tíos, and my fat brother were going to catch me. I was going to run as fast as my long legs could carry me. I was going to run down the boardwalk, past Aldo's miserable house, out of Wildwood, out of New Jersey, and I wasn't going to stop. I was going to *fly*.

Anyway, that's how it *should* have worked out. But I looked back. I couldn't help it. It's not like I didn't know my Bible, all the pillars-of-salt stuff, but when you're someone's daughter that she raised by herself with no help from nobody habits die hard. I just wanted to make sure my mom hadn't broken her arm or smashed open her skull. I mean, really, who the hell wants to kill her own mother by accident? That's the only reason I glanced back. She was sprawled on the ground, her wig had fallen out of reach, her poor bald head out in the day like something private and shameful, and she was bawling like a lost calf, Hija, hija! And there I was wanting to run off into my future. It was right then that I needed that feeling to guide me, but it wasn't anywhere in sight. Only me.

In the end I didn't have the ovaries. She was on the ground, bald as a baby, crying, probably a month away from dying, and here I was, her one and only daughter. And there was nothing I could do about it. So I walked back and when I reached down to help her she clamped on to me with both hands. That was when I realized she hadn't been crying at all. She'd been faking! Her smile was like a lion's.

Ya te tengo, she said, jumping triumphantly to her feet. Te tengo.

And that is how I ended up in Santo Domingo. I guess my mother thought it would be harder for me to run away from an island where I knew no one, and in a way she was right. I'm into my sixth month here and these days I'm just trying to be philosophical about the whole thing. I wasn't like that at first, but in the end I had to let it go. It was like the fight between the egg and the rock, my abuela said. No winning.

I'm actually going to school, not that it's going to count when I return to Paterson, but it keeps me busy and out of trouble and around people my own age. You don't need to be around us viejos all day, Abuela says. I have mixed feelings about the school. For one thing, it's improved my Spanish a lot. It's a private school, a Carol Morgan wanna-be filled with people my tío Carlos Moya calls los hijos de mami y papi. And then there's me. If you think it was tough being a goth in Paterson, try being a Dominican york in one of those private schools back in D.R. You will never meet bitchier girls in your whole life. They whisper about me to death. Someone else would have had a nervous breakdown, but after Wildwood I'm not so brittle. I don't let it get to me.

And the irony of all ironies? I'm on our school's track team. I joined because my friend Rosio, the scholarship girl from Los Mina, told me I could win a spot on the team on the length of my legs alone. Those are the pins of a winner, she prophesied. Well, she must have known something I didn't, because I'm now our school's top runner in the four hundred metres and under. That I have talent at this simple thing never ceases to amaze me. Karen would pass out if she could see me running sprints out behind my school while Coach Cortés screams at us, first in Spanish and then in Catalán. Breathe, breathe, *breathe!* I've got like no fat left on me and the musculature of my legs impresses everyone, even me. I can't wear shorts anymore without causing traffic jams, and the other day when my abuela accidentally locked us out of the house she turned to me in frustration and said, Hija, just kick the door open. That pushed a laugh out of both of us.

So much has changed these last months, in my head, my heart. Rosio has me dressing up like a real Dominican girl. She's the one who fixes my hair and helps me with my makeup, and

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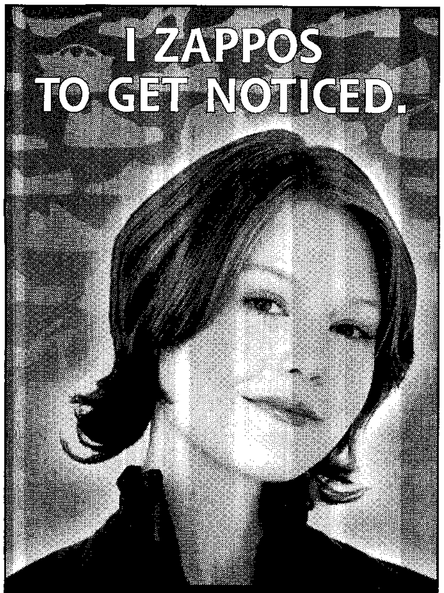

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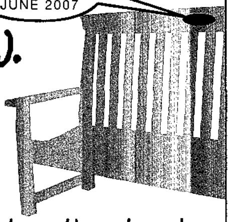

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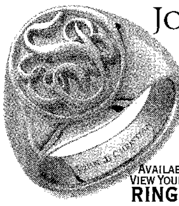

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sometimes when I see myself in mirrors I don't even know who I am anymore. Not that I'm unhappy or anything. Even if I found a hot-air balloon that would whisk me straight to U2's house I'm not sure I would take it. (I'm still not talking to my traitor brother, though.) The truth is I'm even thinking of staying one more year. Abuela doesn't want me ever to leave—I'll miss you, she says so simply it can't be anything but true—and my mom has told me I can stay if I want to but that I would be welcome at home, too. Tía Rubelka tells me she's hanging tough, my mother, that she's back to two jobs. They sent me a picture of the whole family and Abuela framed it and I can't look at it without misting up. My mother's not wearing her fakies in it; she looks so thin I don't even recognize her.

Just know that I would die for you, she told me the last time we talked. And before I could say anything she hung up.

But that's not what I wanted to tell you. It's about that crazy feeling that started this whole mess, the bruja feeling that comes singing out of my bones, that takes hold of me the way blood seizes cotton. The feeling that tells me that everything in my life is about to change. It's come back. Just the other day I woke up from all these dreams and it was there, pulsing inside of me. I imagine this is what it feels like to have a child in you. At first I was scared, because I thought it was telling me to run away again, but every time I looked around our house, every time I saw my abuela the feeling got stronger, so I knew this was something different.

I was dating a boy by then, a sweet morenito by the name of Max Sánchez, who I had met in Los Mina while visiting Rosio. He's short, but his smile and his snappy dressing make up for a lot. Because I'm from Nueba Yol he talks about how rich he's going to become and I try to explain to him that I don't care about that, but he looks at me like I'm crazy. I'm going to get a white Mercedes-Benz, he says. Tú verás. But it's the job he has that I love best, that got me and him started. In Santo Domingo two or three theatres often share the same set of reels for a movie, so when the first theatre finishes with the first reel they put it in Max's hands and he rides his motorcycle like crazy to make it to the second theatre and then he drives back, waits, picks up the second reel, and so on. If he's held up or gets into an accident the first reel will end and there will be no second reel and the people in the audience will throw bottles. So far he's been blessed, he tells me while kissing his San Miguel medal. Because of me, he brags, one movie becomes three. I'm the man who puts together the pictures. Max is not from la clase alta, as my abuela would describe it, and if any of the stuck-up bitches in school saw us they would just about die, but I'm fond of him. He holds open doors, he calls me his morena; when he's feeling brave he touches my arm gently and then pulls back.

Anyway I thought maybe the feeling was about Max, and so one day I let him take me to one of the love motels. He was so excited he almost fell off the bed, and the first thing he wanted was to look at my ass. I never knew my big ass could be such a star attraction, but he kissed it, four, five times, gave me goose bumps with his breath, and pronounced it a tesoro. When we were done and he was in the bathroom washing himself I stood in front of the mirror naked and looked at my culo for the first time. A tesoro, I repeated. A treasure.

Well? Rosio asked at school. And I nodded once, quickly, and she grabbed me and laughed and all the girls I hated turned to look, but what could they do? Happiness, when it comes, is stronger than all the jerk girls in Santo Domingo combined.

But I was still confused. Because the feeling, it just kept getting stronger and stronger, wouldn't let me sleep, wouldn't give me any peace. I started losing races, which was something I never did.

You ain't so great, are you, gringa, the girls on the other teams hissed at me, and I could only hang my head. Coach Cortés was so unhappy he just locked himself in his car and wouldn't say anything to any of us.

The whole thing was driving me crazy, and then one night I came home from being out with Max. He had taken me for a walk along the

Malecón—he never had money for anything else—and we had watched the bats zigzagging over the palms and an old ship head into the distance. While I stretched my hamstrings, he talked quietly about moving to the U.S. My abuela was waiting for me at the living-room table. Even though she still wears black to mourn the husband she lost when she was young she's one of the most handsome women I've ever known. We have the same jagged lightning-bolt part, and when I saw her at the airport, the first time in ten years, I didn't want to admit it but I knew that things were going to be O.K. between us. She stood like she was her own best thing and when she saw me she said, Hija, I have waited for you since the day you left. And then she hugged me and kissed me and said, I'm your abuela, but you can call me La Inca.

Standing over her that night, her part like a crack in her hair, I felt a surge of tenderness. I put my arms around her and that was when I noticed that she was looking at photos. Old photos, the kind I'd never seen in my house. Photos of my mother when she was young, before she had her breasts. She was even skinnier than me! I picked the smallest photo up. Mami was standing in front of a bakery. Even with an apron on she looked potent, like someone who was going to be someone.

She was very guapa, I said casually.

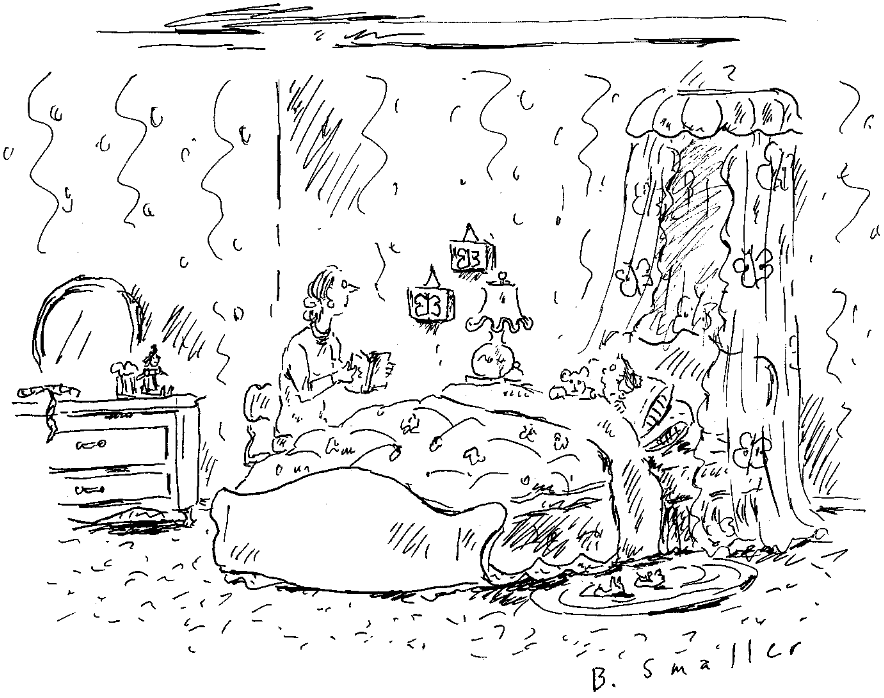
Abuela snorted. Guapa soy yo. Your mother was a diosa. But so cabeza dura. When she was your age we never got along. She was cabeza dura and I was . . . exigente. You and her are more alike than you think.

I know she ran away. From you. From Santo Domingo.

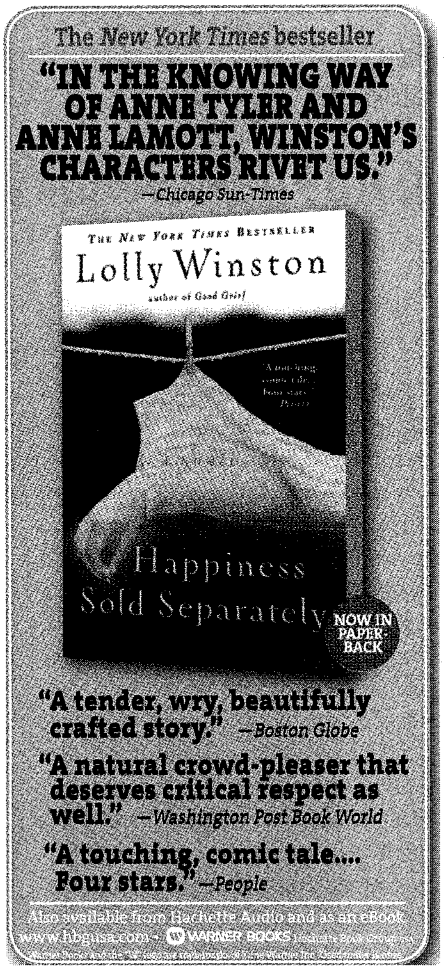
La Inca stared at me, incredulous. Your mother didn't run away. We had to *send* her away. To keep her from being murdered. To keep us all from being murdered. She didn't listen and she fell in love with the wrong man. She didn't listen. Jesu Cristo, hija—

She was about to say something more and then she stopped.

And that's when it hit with the force of a hurricane. The *feeling*. My abuela was sitting there, forlorn, trying to cobble together the right words, and I could not move or breathe. I felt like I always did in the last seconds of a race, when I was sure that I was going to explode. She was about to say something and I was waiting for whatever she was going to give me. I was waiting to begin. ♦



"I like 'Cinderella'—it's just that I feel the characters of the stepsisters are underwritten."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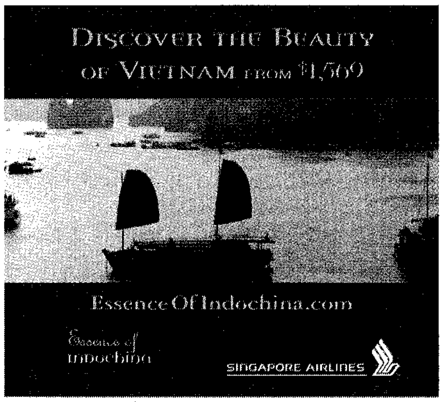
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SUMMER MOVIES

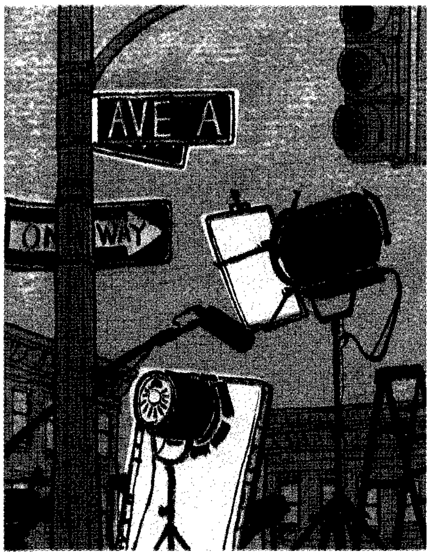
OLD ENOUGH

I walked out of the subway station at Seventy-second Street and Broadway into the July morning carrying an empty duffelbag. In a single week, the Upper West Side had risen to the top of my personal travel-warning list; it was no longer a safe place to go. I turned the corner and headed toward the brownstone apartment that, until a recent night of steamy rain and unfamiliar emotions, I had occupied. All I needed to do was pick up my clothes and my typewriter. If he was there, I decided, I would be cordial and quick. I would not get into it—"it" being the deformed object that a relationship becomes when it is angrily over.

As I drew closer to my former apartment, I had that strange sensation you get when approaching roadkill: a twist in the gut that tells you that nature has been turned upside down. And there—as if it were my body that had been crushed, my guts spilling out—was everything I owned, overflowing the twin garbage cans that fronted my old building. There were my sweaters and my shirts, my copy of "Dog Soldiers," of "Aretha Franklin's Greatest Hits." On top of the pile, I discovered my school report cards, which, along with my yearbooks and my flute music, were still recent enough history to feel like necessary objects. I picked up my fifth-grade report. "English: 88. French: 72." 72? "Marisa has not shown herself to be a capable student of the French language," it said. "She is, however, possessed of a passable accent." I left the duffelbag by the garbage cans and walked away.

The following day, I began shooting the first film I had written and the first I would direct. Called "Old Enough," it was based on the story of my childhood fascination with a girl who lived on my block on Manhattan's East Side. I was naïve and curious, she was exciting and dangerous, and for a summer I followed her lead as we dipped our toes into the complex pond of boys and men, discovering the first, pre-adolescent mysteries of attraction.

Now, on the corner of Sixth Street and Avenue A, I watched men hoist cameras and erect lighting silks. I heard the crackle of walkie-talkies as orders were issued about holding traffic and getting the actors into the makeup trailer. It was only seven o'clock in the morning, but any trace of freshness the day had begun with had been snuffed out by the dense mixture of smells—garbage, food, and exhaust—that was the perfume of the city in high heat. We were the leanest of production companies. My sister was the producer, her boyfriend the caterer. The rest of the crew was a collection of college friends and young New York film people, all led, improbably, by a world-class German cinematographer who had agreed to cross the ocean to shoot our film. Everyone was charged with a sense of purpose, and I was humbled by the notion that all these good and talented people were working here because one day I had written "The girls cross the street" on a piece of paper.



YUKO SHIMIZU

I stood at the center of it all, having woken up that morning in a new, empty sublet. I was about to make a movie about a time in my life when the protective innocence of childhood had peeled away to uncover the shadowy world of desire. And now, twelve years later, desire had kicked me in the stomach. I felt raw, unformed, and no more prepared for the adult world of risk and consequence than I had been so many years earlier.

Lacking a crane, or any other expensive toys, we had to take the shot of the girls crossing the street from atop the camera truck. I stood on the hot metal roof next to the cinematographer as he spoke to his assistants. Below me, New Yorkers passed on their way to work, barely interested in what we were doing, except inasmuch as it impeded their routes. A man on a bicycle flashed by, and there was that unsettling intuition again: it was him. Why was he there? To cheer me on? To curse me? To alert me to the fact that, for a long time to come, the failure of our relationship would continue to pass before me like this bicycle: a fleeting dark shadow, reminding me how easy it is to confuse want with happiness?

The walkie-talkies were silenced. The assistant director said, "Roll sound" and "Roll camera." I turned from the empty place where the bicycle had been to the expectant faces around me, all waiting for me to say the word.

I was twenty-two years old. I had a passable French accent, a new outfit, and not much else. I realized that the minute I said the word, things would hurtle forward—the film, my life. They waited. I said it. *Action.*

—*Marisa Silver*

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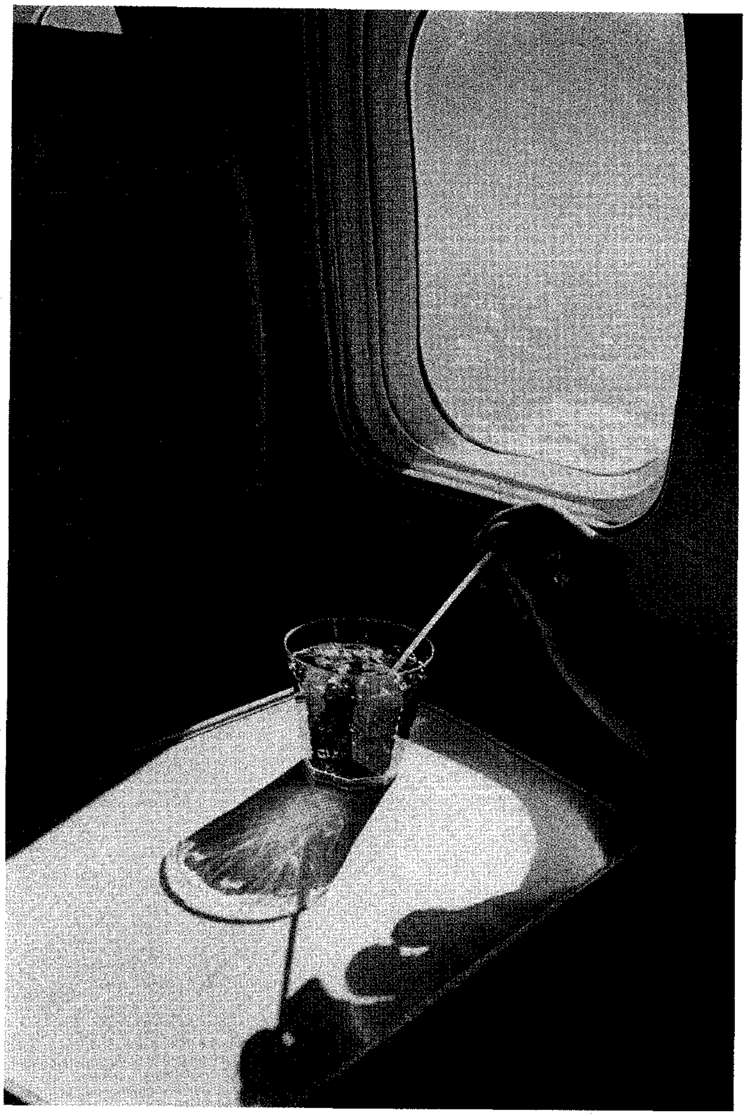
FICTION

ROY SPIVEY

BY MIRANDA JULY



WILLIAM EGGLESTON, "UNTITLED"/EGGLESTON ARTISTIC TRUST/CHEIM & REID

Twice I have sat next to a famous man on an airplane. The first man was Jason Kidd, of the New Jersey Nets. I asked him why he didn't fly first class, and he said that it was because his cousin worked for United.

"Wouldn't that be all the more reason to get first class?"

"It's cool," he said, unfurling his legs into the aisle.

I let it go, because what do I know about the ins and outs of being a sports celebrity? We didn't talk for the rest of the flight.

I can't say the name of the second famous person, but I will tell you that he is a Hollywood heartthrob who is married to a starlet. Also, he has the letter "V" in his first name. That's all—I can't say anything more than that. Think espionage. O.K., the end—that really is all. I'll call him Roy Spivey, which is almost an anagram of his name.

If I were a more self-assured person I would not have volunteered to give up my seat on an overcrowded flight, would not have been upgraded to first class, would not have been seated beside him. This was my reward for being a pushover. He slept for the first hour, and it was startling to see such a famous face look so vulnerable and empty. He had the window seat and I had the aisle, and I felt as though I were watching over him, protecting him from the bright lights and the paparazzi. Sleep, little spy, sleep. He's actually not little, but we're all children when we sleep. For this reason, I always let men see me asleep early on in a relationship. It makes them realize that even though I am five feet eleven I am fragile and need to be taken care of. A man who can see the weakness of a giant knows that he is a man indeed. Soon, small women make him feel almost fey—and, lo, he now has a thing for tall women.

Roy Spivey shifted in his seat, waking. I quickly shut my own eyes, and then slowly opened them, as if I, too, had been sleeping. Oh, but he hadn't quite opened his yet. I shut mine again and right away opened them, slowly, and he opened his, slowly, and our eyes met, and it seemed as if we had woken from a single sleep, from the dream of our entire lives. Me, a tall but otherwise undistinguished woman; he a distinguished spy, but not really, just an actor, but not really, just a man, maybe even just a boy. That's the other way that my height can work on men, the more common way: I become their mother.

We talked ceaselessly for the next two hours, having the conversation that is specifically about everything. He told me intimate details about his wife, the beautiful Ms. M. Who would have guessed that she was so troubled?

"Oh, yeah, everything in the tabloids is true."

"It is?"

"Yeah, especially about her eating disorder."

"But the affairs?"

"No, not the affairs, of course not. You can't believe the 'bloids."

"'Bloids?"

"We call them 'bloids. Or tabs."

When the meals were served, it felt as if we were eating breakfast in bed together, and when I got up to use the bathroom he joked, "You're leaving me!"

And I said, "I'll be back!"

As I walked up the aisle, many of the passengers stared at me, especially the women. Word had travelled fast in this tiny flying village. Perhaps there were even some 'bloid writers on the flight. There were definitely some 'bloid readers. Had we been talking loudly? It seemed to me that we were whispering. I looked in the mirror while I was peeing and wondered if I was the plainest person he had ever talked to. I took off my blouse and tried to wash under my arms, which isn't really possible in such a small bathroom. I tossed handfuls of water toward my armpits and they landed on my skirt. It was made from the kind of fabric that turns much darker when it is wet. This was a real situation I had got myself into. I acted quickly, taking off my skirt and soaking the whole thing in the sink, then wringing it out and putting it back on. I smoothed it out with my hands. There. It was all a shade darker now. I walked back down the aisle, being careful not to touch anyone with my dark skirt.

When Roy Spivey saw me, he shouted, "You came back!"

And I laughed and he said, "What happened to your skirt?"

I sat down and explained the whole thing, starting with the armpits. He listened quietly until I was done.

"So were you able to wash your armpits in the end?"

"No."

"Are they smelly?"

"I think so."

"I can smell them and tell you."

"No."

"It's O.K. It's part of showbiz."

"Really?"

"Yeah. Here."

He leaned over and pressed his nose against my shirt.

"It's smelly."

"Oh. Well, I tried to wash it."

But he was standing up now, climbing past me to the aisle and rummaging around in the overhead bin. He fell back into his seat dramatically, holding a pump bottle.

"It's Febreze."

"Oh, I've heard about that."

"It dries in seconds, taking odor with it. Lift up your arms."

I lifted my arms, and with great focus he pumped three hard sprays under each sleeve.

"It's best if you keep your arms out until it dries."

I held them out. One arm extended into the aisle and the other arm crossed his chest, my hand pressing against the window. It was suddenly obvious how tall I was. Only a very tall woman could shoulder such a wingspan. He stared at my arm in front of his chest for a moment, then he growled and bit it. Then he laughed. I laughed, too, but I did not know what this was, this biting of my arm.

"What was that?"

"That means I like you!"

"O.K."

"Do you want to bite me?"

"No."

"You don't like me?"

"No, I do."

"Is it because I'm famous?"

"No."

"Just because I'm famous doesn't mean I don't need what everyone else needs. Here, bite me anywhere. Bite my shoulder."

He slid back his jacket, unbuttoned the first four buttons on his shirt, and pulled it back, exposing a large, tanned shoulder. I leaned over and very quickly bit it lightly, and then picked up my *SkyMall* catalogue and began reading. After a minute, he rebuttoned himself and slowly picked up his copy of *SkyMall*. We read like this for a good half hour.

During this time I was careful not to think about my life. My life was far below us, in an orangey-pink stucco apartment building. It seemed as though I might never have to return to it now. The salt of his shoulder buzzed on the tip of my tongue. I might never again stand in the middle of the living room and wonder what to do next. I sometimes stood there for up to two hours, unable to generate enough momentum to eat, to go out, to clean, to sleep. It seemed unlikely that someone who had just bitten and been bitten by a celebrity would have this kind of problem.

I read about vacuum cleaners designed to suck insects out of the air. I studied self-heating towel racks, and fake rocks that could hide a key. We were be-

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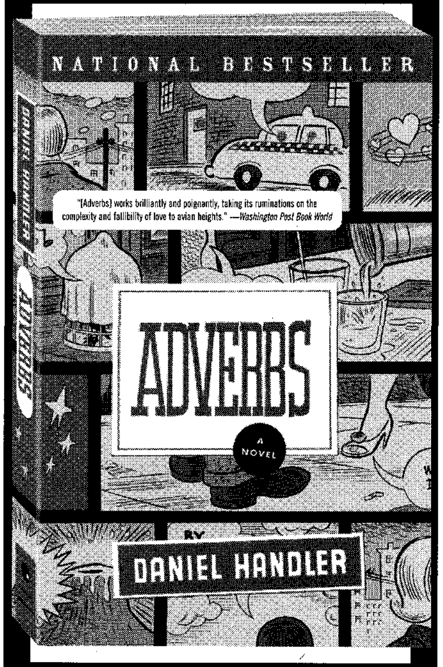
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ginning our descent. We adjusted our seat backs and tray tables. Roy Spivey suddenly turned to me and said, "Hey."

"Hey," I said.

"Hey, I had an amazing time with you."

"I did, too."

"I'm going to write down a number, and I want you to guard it with your life."

"O.K."

"This phone number falls into the wrong hands and I'll have to get someone to change it, and that is a big headache."

"O.K."

He wrote the number on a page from the *SkyMall* catalogue and ripped it out and pressed it into my palm.

"This is my kids' nanny's personal line. The only people who call her on this line are her boyfriend and her son. So she'll always answer it. You'll always get through. And she'll know where I am."

I looked at the number.

"It's missing a digit."

"I know. I want you to just memorize the last number, O.K.?"

"O.K."

"It's four."

We turned our faces to the front of the plane, and Roy Spivey gently took my hand. I was still holding the paper with the number, so he held it with me. I felt warm and simple. Nothing bad could ever happen to me while I was holding hands with him, and when he let go I would have the number that ended in four. I'd wanted a number like this my whole life. The plane landed gracefully, like an easily drawn line. He helped me pull my carry-on bag down from the bin; it looked obscenely familiar.

"My people are going to be waiting for me out there, so I won't be able to say goodbye properly."

"I know. That's all right."

"No, it really isn't. It's a travesty."

"But I understand."

"O.K., here's what I'm going to do. Just before I leave the airport, I'm going to come up to you and say, 'Do you work here?' "

"It's O.K. I really do understand."

"No, this is important to me. I'll say, 'Do you work here?' And then you say your part."

"What's my part?"

"You say, 'No.' "

"O.K."

"And I'll know what you mean. We'll know the secret meaning."

"O.K."

We looked into each other's eyes in a way that said that nothing else mattered as much as us. I asked myself if I would kill my parents to save his life, a question I had been posing since I was fifteen. The answer always used to be yes. But in time all those boys had faded away and my parents were still there. I was now less and less willing to kill them for anyone; in fact, I worried for their health. In this case, however, I had to say yes. Yes, I would.

We walked down the tunnel between the plane and real life, and then, without so much as a look in my direction, he glided away from me.

I tried not to look for him in the baggage-claim area. He would find me before he left. I went to the bathroom. I claimed my bag. I drank from the water fountain. I watched children hit each other. Finally, I let my eyes crawl over everyone. They were all not him, every single one of them. But they all knew his name. Those who were talented at drawing could have drawn him from memory, and everyone else could certainly have described him, if they'd had to, say, to a blind person—the blind being the only people who wouldn't know what he looked like. And even the blind would have known his wife's name, and a few of them would have known the name of the boutique where his wife had bought a lavender tank top and matching boy shorts. Roy Spivey was both nowhere to be found and everywhere. Someone tapped me on the shoulder.

"Excuse me, do you work here?"

It was him. Except that it wasn't him, because there was no voice in his eyes; his eyes were mute. He was acting. I said my line.

"No."

A pretty young airport attendant appeared beside me.

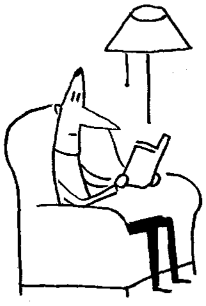
"*I* work here. *I* can help you," she said enthusiastically.

He paused for a fraction of a second and then said, "Great." I waited to see what he would come up with, but the attendant glared at me, as if I were rubbernecking, and then rolled her eyes at him, as if she were protecting him from people like me. I wanted to yell, "It was a code! It had a secret meaning!" But I knew how this would look, so I moved along.

That evening, I found myself standing in the middle of my living-room floor. I had made dinner and eaten it, and then I had an idea that I might clean the house. But halfway to the broom I stopped on a whim, flirting with the emptiness in the center of the room. I wanted to see if I could start again. But, of course, I knew what the answer would be. The longer I stood there, the longer I had to stand there. It was intricate and exponential. I looked like I was doing nothing, but really I was as busy as a physicist or a politician. I was strategizing my next move. That my next move was always not to move didn't make it any easier.

I let go of the idea of cleaning and just hoped that I would get to bed at a reasonable hour. I thought of Roy Spivey in bed with Ms. M. And then I remembered the number. I took it out of my pocket. He had written it across a picture of pink curtains. They were made out of a fabric that was originally designed for the space shuttle; they changed density in reaction to fluctuations of light and heat. I mouthed all the numbers and then said the missing one out loud: "Four." It felt risky and illicit. I yelled, "FOUR!" And moved easily into the bedroom. I put on my nightgown, brushed my teeth, and went to bed.

Over the course of my life, I've used the number many times. Not the telephone number, just the four. When I first met my husband, I used to whisper "four" while we had intercourse, because it was so painful. Then I learned about a tiny operation that I could have to enlarge myself. I whispered "four" when my dad died of lung cancer. When my daughter got into trouble doing God knows what in Mexico City, I said "four" to myself as I gave her my credit-card number over the phone. Which was confusing—thinking one number and saying another. My husband jokes about my lucky number, but I've never told him about Roy. You shouldn't underestimate a man's capacity for feeling threatened. You don't have to be a great beauty for men to come to blows over you. At my high-school reunion, I pointed out a teacher I'd once had a crush on, and by the end of the night this teacher and my husband were wrestling in a hotel parking garage. My husband said that it was about issues of race, but I knew. Some things are best left unsaid.



This morning, I was cleaning out my jewelry box when I came upon a little slip of paper with pink curtains on it. I thought I had lost it long ago, but, no, there it was, folded underneath a dried-up carnation and some impractically heavy bracelets. I hadn't whispered "four" in years. The idea of luck made me feel a little weary now, like Christmas when you're not in the mood.

I stood by the window and studied Roy Spivey's handwriting in the light. He was older now—we all were—but he was still working. He had his own TV show. He wasn't a spy anymore; he played the father of twelve rascally kids. It occurred to me now that I had missed the point entirely. He had wanted me to call him. I looked out the window: my husband was in the driveway, vacuuming out the car. I sat on the bed with the number in my lap and the phone in my hands. I dialled all the digits, including the invisible one that had shepherded me through my adult life. It was no longer in service. Of course it wasn't. It was preposterous for me to have thought that it would still be his nanny's private line. Roy Spivey's children had long since grown up. The nanny was probably working for someone else, or maybe she'd done well for herself—put herself through nursing school or business school. Good for her. I looked down at the number and felt a tidal swell of loss. It was too late. I had waited too long.

I listened to the sound of my husband beating the car mats on the sidewalk. Our ancient cat pressed against my legs, wanting food. But I couldn't seem to stand up. Minutes passed, almost an hour. Now it was starting to get dark. My husband was downstairs making a drink and I was about to stand up. Crickets were chirping in the yard and I was about to stand up. ♦

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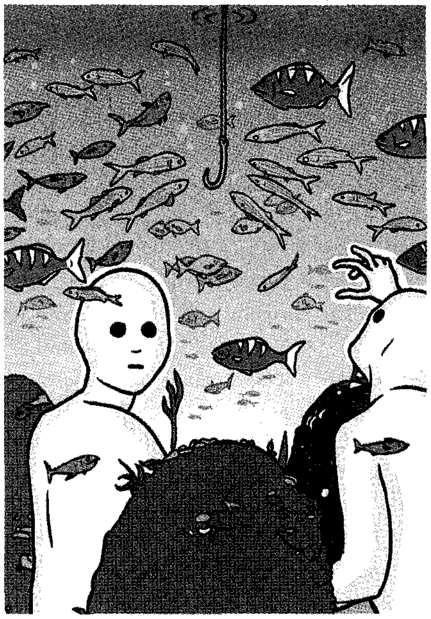
SUMMER MOVIES

IMMORTALITY

In 1985, when I became a man according to Jewish tradition, my family summered in a Russian bungalow colony in the Catskill Mountains. The colony consisted of a dozen sunburned wooden cottages squeezed in between some unimpressive hills and a daunting forest-and-brook combination that to kids from Rego Park, Queens, might as well have been the Amazon. During the workweek, it was inhabited by grandmas and their charges (a few grandpas had survived the Second World War to play competitive chess beneath the easygoing American sun), our lives revolving around the intermittent delivery of stale baked goods from the back of a station wagon. "Bread! Cakes!" an unhappy middle-aged local woman would yell at us, and we would jostle for a week-old raspberry Danish on sale for a quarter which tasted as good as anything we had ever known.

My grandmother was always in the background, chewing an apricot down to its pit, her eyes fixed firmly on my weak, somewhat flabby body, making sure nothing and no one would cause me harm. Other kids had similar minders—women who had come of age under Stalin, whose entire lives in the U.S.S.R. had been devoted to crisis management, to making sure the arbitrary world around them would treat their children better than it had treated them. My grandmother talked about going to "the next world," and that bar-mitzvah summer, having passed a milestone of my own, I began to see her as an older woman in decline: the shaking hands clutching the apricot pit, the trembling voice as she begged me to swallow another forkful of sausage; a figure as anxious and helpless before eternity as any other. Maybe this was what America did to you. With the daily fight for survival abated, you could either reminisce about the past or face the singular destiny of the future.

On Friday nights, we kids would sit at a picnic table by the quiet country road, alert as terriers for the difficult sounds our fathers' secondhand cars made. I remember my first love of that year—not a girl but the gleaming new beige Mitsubishi Tredia S sedan that my parents had bought, a boxy little number known mostly for its fuel efficiency. The front-wheel-drive Tredia S was an indication that we were slowly ascending to the middle class, and whenever my father and I were out on the road I would rejoice if I saw the more basic Tredia model (the one without the "S").



TYLER STOUT

My father was at the apex of middle age then, a deeply physical man who feasted with great emphasis upon garlic cloves on hunks of black bread and who, with his small, tough physique, best resembled a cherry tomato. He lived for fishing. Each year, he would pluck hundreds, if not thousands, of fish out of streams, lakes, and oceans with a three-dollar bamboo fishing rod and a chilling competence. I believe he single-handedly emptied out a lake near Middletown, New York, leaving behind just a small school of dazed, orphaned crappies. The bar mitzvah may have made me a man, but when my father and I entered the forbidding, grasshopper-ridden forest by the bungalow colony and he reached into the ground to sift for the juiciest worms, I felt coursing through me the Russian word for "weak"—*slabyi*, an adjective that from my father's mouth could reduce me to near-zero.

When we weren't fishing, we entertained ourselves at humble cinemas in towns like Liberty and Ellenville. The movie of that summer was "Cocoon." Its premise: aliens—Antareans, to be exact—descend upon southern Florida to offer eternal life to a group of nursing-home residents. At that point in my life, Hollywood could sell me anything—from Daryl Hannah as a mermaid to Shelley Duvall as Olive Oyl and Al Pacino as a rather violent Cuban émigré. Watching movies, I felt close to my father, removed from the difficulties of worm-gathering while being attacked by aggressive grasshoppers, free of my constant fear of getting my thumb impaled on one of the gigantic rusty hooks with which he terrorized the local trout. At the movie theatre, my father and I were essentially two immigrant men—one smaller than the other and not yet swaddled in a thick carpet of body hair—sitting before the canned spectacle of our new homeland, silent, attentive, enthralled.

Here was the geriatric Don Ameche break-dancing after being energized by the aliens' fountain of youth, while back at our bungalow colony my grandmother and her fellow senior citizens mulled over the price of farmer's cheese and reminisced about the Great Patriotic War. Here were Floridian palm trees, ocean breezes, and Tahnee Welch—daughter of

Raquel—taking off her clothes while Steve Guttenberg, playing essentially himself, peeked through a peephole. I had never seen a woman as easily beautiful, as effortlessly tanned and as New World lovely, as Ms. Welch the Younger. The fact that my sexual awakening peripherally involved Steve Guttenberg I have gradually accepted.

The theme of the movie is immortality. "We'll never be sick," the character played by Wilford Brimley tells his grandson before the aliens beam him up. "We won't get any older. And we'll never die." Brimley's character is casting a fishing line into the Atlantic Ocean while his worried grandson looks on, a sliver of a boy next to a fully formed, famously mustached mastodon of a man. As my father guided home the Mitsubishi Tredia S beneath the bright rural canopy of stars, our sedan redolent of dead fish, live worms, and male sweat, I wondered why Wilford Brimley didn't take his grandson with him to Antares. Wouldn't that mean that he would outlive his grandson? Were some of us destined for a flicker of physical existence while others exploded like supernovas across the cold mountain sky? If so, where was the American fairness in that? That night, as my father's healthy snores rumbled in the bed next to mine and my grandmother wandered in and out of the bathroom, I considered both the nothingness to which we would all eventually succumb and its very opposite, the backside of Tahnee Welch partly shrouded in a pair of white shorts. I wanted Wilford Brimley to be my grandpa and I wanted him to die. I kept thinking of what he told his *slabyi*, obsessive little grandson at the start of the film: "The trouble with you is you think too much and that's when a guy gets scared."

—*Gary Shteyngart*

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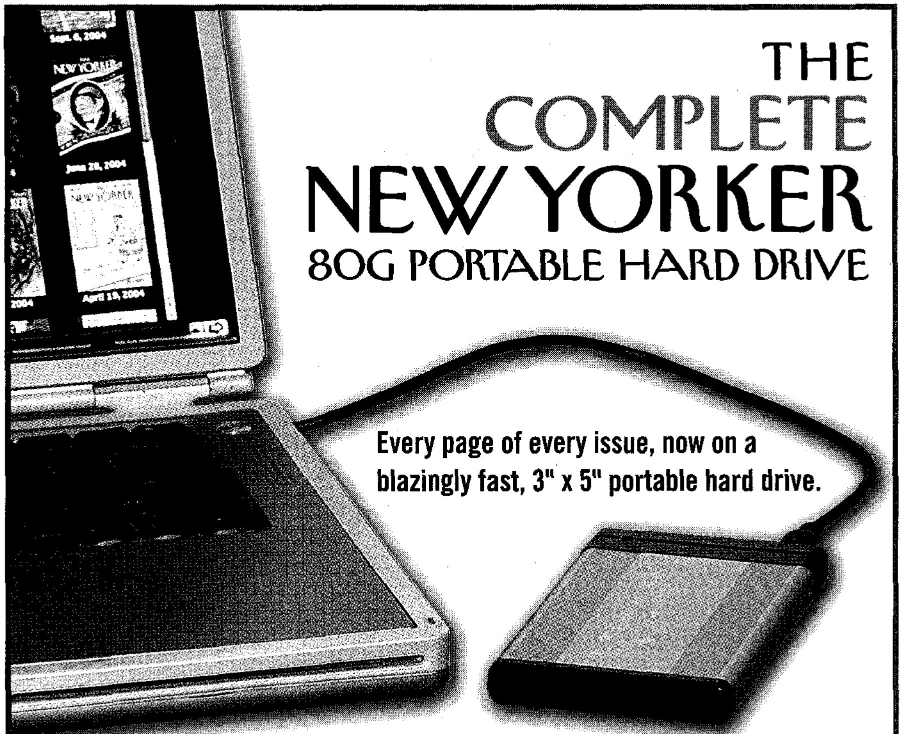

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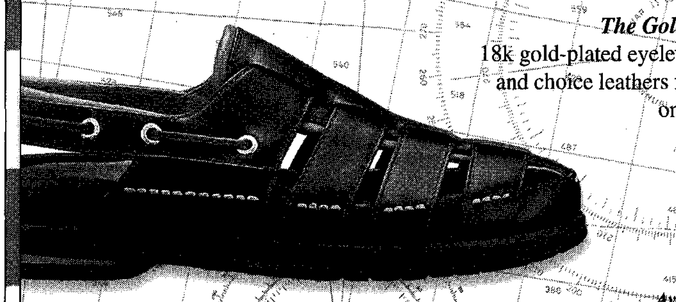

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PERSONAL HISTORY

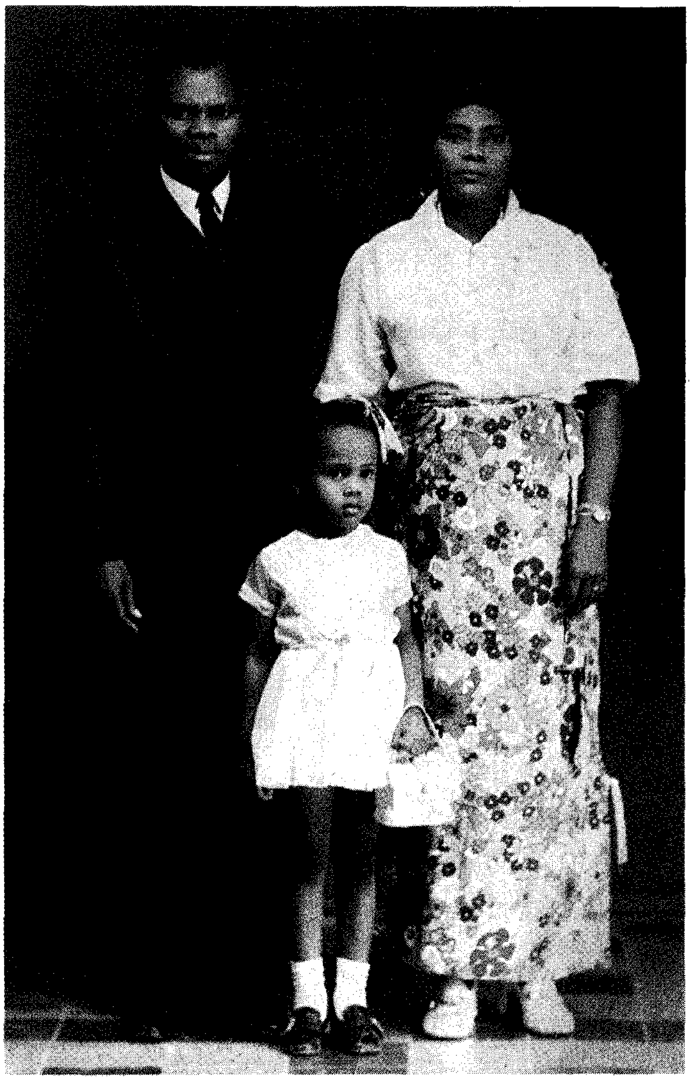
MARIE MICHELINE

A life in Haiti.

BY EDWIDGE DANTICAT

Marie Micheline went to live with my uncle Joseph and aunt Denise for the same reason that my brother and I did: our parents had disappeared. They had not abandoned us. Nor had they been imprisoned or killed by the henchmen of the dictatorship that had come to power in Haiti in 1957, when Marie Micheline was five years old and my parents had not yet met. They had simply, as my uncle explained first to her and then to us, gone elsewhere. Our father and mother had, in 1971 and 1973, respectively, immigrated to New York, where they immediately began the process of obtaining visas for us to join them. In Marie's case, it was more complicated.

Marie Micheline's father, Guillermo Hernandez, was a Cuban émigré who'd moved to Port-au-Prince sometime in the late nineteen-forties, when there was a lot of back-and-forth between the two islands and a large number of Haitians were returning home after decades of working in Cuban sugarcane fields. No one knows for sure why Guillermo came, but my uncle thought that he had impulsively left Cuba to follow a woman, who in the end did not return his affections. In Port-au-Prince, Guillermo, thanks to his language skills, which meant that he could sell to visiting Dominican tourists, got a job at the downtown fabric shop where my uncle Joseph worked. Soon, Guillermo fell for another woman, a regular customer named Janette, with whom he had Marie Micheline, in 1952. Shortly after Marie Micheline was born, however, Janette fell ill and died, leaving Guillermo to raise a child alone in a country where he did not know many people. He had a number of "friendships," as my uncle liked to call them, with other women, but none of them wanted to take care of his motherless child. Of all his co-workers, my uncle was the only one with a family of his own—my cousin Maxo, my uncle's son, was six at the time—so Guillermo asked Oncle Joseph if he could leave young Marie Micheline at his house while he and my uncle were at work. Every morning, Guillermo would dutifully carry the baby to Tante Denise, then he and my uncle would walk to work together. Every evening, Guillermo would carry her back to the small apartment that he and Janette had shared. Finally, Tante Denise, who'd grown attached to the baby, asked Guillermo to let her spend week nights with her. Marie Micheline would then spend only weekends with her father. A few months later, when she was six months old, Guillermo informed Oncle Joseph and Tante Denise that he was going to Cuba for a visit. He would come back for his daughter, he said, but, just in case he wasn't able to, he left a signed document indicating that they had the right to adopt her. They never saw him again.



The author, with her uncle Joseph and aunt Denise, circa 1973.

COURTESY EDWIDGE DANTICAT

At the time of Guillermo's departure, the President of Haiti was Paul Magloire, an anti-Communist Army general nicknamed Kanson Fé, or Iron Pants, because of a speech in which he'd declared that he had to put on "iron pants" to deal with the troublemakers in the country. In 1956, amid national protest strikes, Magloire stepped down and fled the country. Following a slippery line of succession that included several temporary governments, some of which lasted less than three weeks, François (Papa Doc) Duvalier assumed the Presidency, in 1957.

Papa Doc's reign was marked by extremely repressive tactics. Opponents were routinely exiled, imprisoned, or publicly executed. In 1958, he created a "voluntary militia for national security," which was known as the Tonton Macoutes, a battalion of brutal men and women aggressively recruited from among the country's urban and rural poor. Upon joining the Macoutes, you received an identification card that declared your alliance to Papa Doc, an indigo denim uniform, a homburg hat, a .38, and the privilege of doing whatever you wanted.

My father worked in a Port-au-Prince shoe store at the time, and he recalled how Macoutes would walk into the store, ask for the best shoes, then simply grab them and walk away. He couldn't protest or chase them or he risked being shot. His boss finally came up with a solution. He ordered a large number of third-rate, non-leather shoes that looked like the real thing but cost only three dollars. Most of the Macoutes who walked in either didn't care or couldn't tell the difference. If they asked to try on a pair of shoes, my father was to show them only the cheap shoes. Papa always got a knot in his stomach when a Macoute asked him if there were any other shoes. He'd try not to shake as he replied, "*Non*," all the while bending and massaging the three-dollar shoes to make them appear more supple. In the end, it was this experience of bending shoes all day and worrying about being shot that started him thinking about leaving Haiti.

My uncle Joseph, though equally disheartened by the dictatorship, did not think of leaving the country. He joined a Baptist congregation instead, and enrolled in a training course for future pastors. While taking the course, he befriended a group of American missionaries who regularly came to Haiti. He was eager to open his own church and school, and the missionaries were looking to fund a project in the area. My uncle bought a plot of land near his house in Bel Air, a hilltop neighborhood overlooking Port-au-Prince Harbor, and spent his evenings designing, then building, his church. When it was under construction, he visited the site daily, both before and after his work at the fabric shop. He stacked bricks, mixed cement, and hammered wood with the workers. He wanted to feel that he was investing more than his heart and his mind—he was investing his hands and his feet, his labor, too. He named the church L'Église Chrétienne de la Rédemption.

From age four to age twelve, when I joined my parents in New York, I lived in my uncle's house, along with Marie Micheline, whom Joseph and Denise had by then adopted, and a slew of other cousins. In 1974, the year I turned five, Marie Micheline was twenty-two, and secretly pregnant. Wiry and slight, she was nevertheless able to hide her growing belly for nearly twenty-eight weeks, until one morning when she overslept and missed an important nursing-school exam.

When Tante Denise went to rouse her, she found her in her room, lying on her back, her stretched-out navel pointing straight up at the ceiling.

"Joseph Nosius!" Tante Denise cried out for my uncle as though both she and Marie were in mortal danger.

Oncle Joseph was slow in coming, but my cousin Liline and I ran to Marie Micheline's bedside. We both adored Marie Micheline, because she was always kind to us. Even though she was so much older than us, she occasionally took the time to invite us to her room or to sit down next to us at a meal and whisper in our ears a story that proved how much our absent parents loved us. I had no memory of my father's departure, or of anything that had preceded it, but Marie Micheline used to tell me how, the year before he left, he would often buy me a small pack of butter cookies on his way home from work in the evening. I didn't like the cookies. But my face would light up when I saw them and I'd laugh and laugh when he gave me one; I'd return it to him, only to hoot even more when he popped it into his own mouth. I don't know the details of Liline's story, but it had something to do with her father, too. Liline's father, Tante Denise's youngest brother, Linoir, had left Haiti to work as a cane cutter in the Dominican Republic. Liline's mother had six other children and very little money, so Linoir had asked Tante Denise to look after Liline until he came back. "Your father loved you so much," Marie Micheline would tell Liline at the end of her story, "that he left you with us."

With Tante Denise panting over her, Marie Micheline stirred and tried to rub the sleep out of her eyes. Her short hair was curled in tight sponge rollers and wrapped in the thick dark web of a fish net. When she removed her hands from her eyes, she seemed unsure of what we were all doing there.

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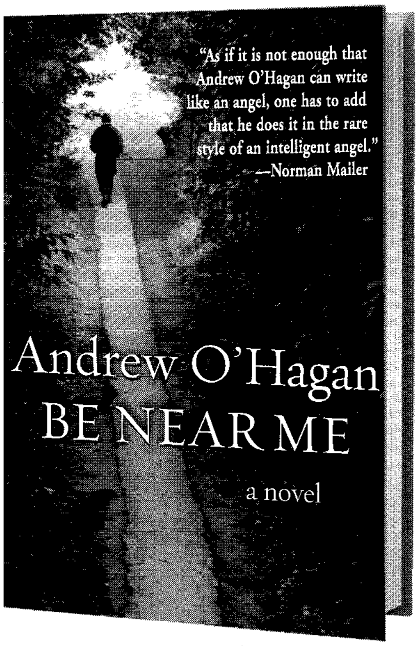
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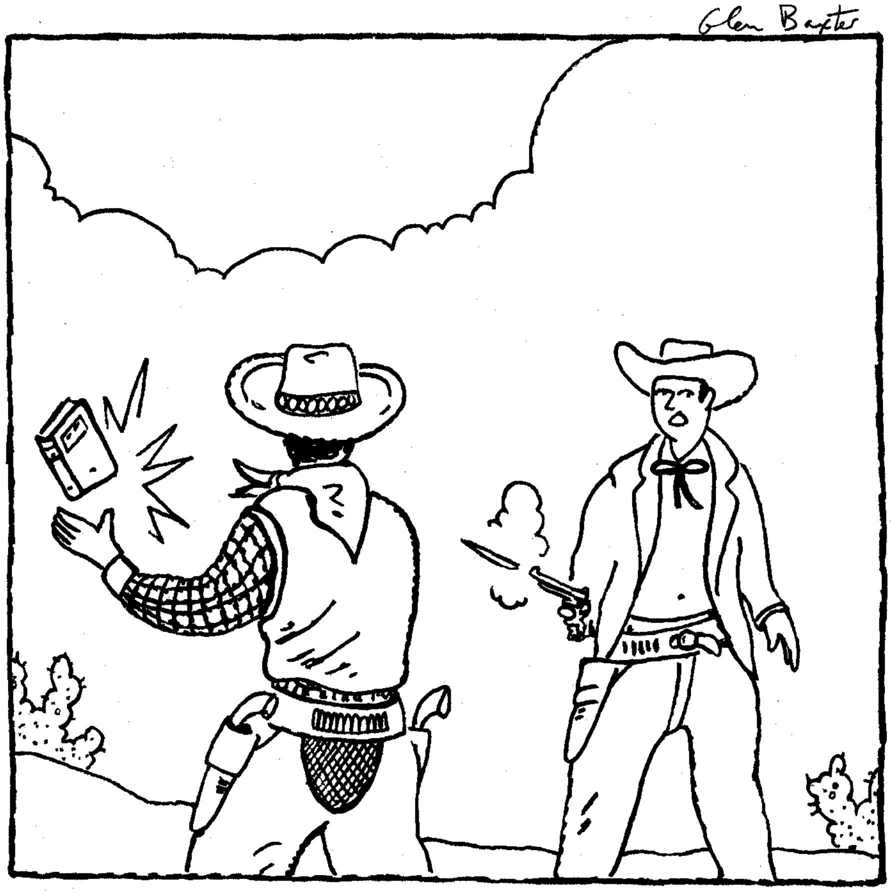

"WE DON'T HOLD WITH ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING ROUND THESE PARTS!" EXPLAINED BIG JAKE.

• •

Tante Denise grabbed her by the shoulder and shook her. "Your father's a pastor. How is it going to look if his daughter is pregnant without the benefit of marriage?"

Marie Micheline looked down at her belly, quickly lowered her nightgown, and pulled up the sheet that had slipped off her in the night. She kept her head down when Oncle Joseph finally walked into the room.

Sitting at the foot of the bed, he gently stroked Marie Micheline's covered feet. "What's the matter?" he asked.

Marie Micheline looked into his eyes. Her long, narrow face, which was usually as smooth and peaceful as a plastic doll's, crumpled into sobs.

"She's pregnant!" Tante Denise yelled, pulling the sheet and nightgown aside.

My uncle gasped at the sight. Marie Micheline's belly was heavily veined, round and high, as though it were about to creep up and swallow the space occupied by her breasts.

"How many months?" he asked.

"Seven," Marie Micheline answered, cradling her belly in her hands. She did her best not to look at Tante Denise.

"What have we ever done to you?" Tante Denise cried out in a strained, high-pitched voice. "Haven't we taken care of you from the time you were left here as a baby?"

Marie Micheline sat up and lowered her feet off the bed. "I knew it!" she shouted. "I knew you'd act like this. I'm pregnant, not ungrateful."

My uncle raised his hands, signalling for them both to quiet down. Then he motioned for Liline and me to leave the room.

"Who's the father?" we heard him ask as we left.

We didn't wander far from the doorway. The father, Marie Micheline stammered, was Jean Pradel, the oldest of seven brothers who lived across the alley from us. (I have changed his name.) The Pradel boys were handsome young men, well built and, thanks to their mother's ice-and-soda shop and their father's tailoring business, well educated. Their father was sombre and fussy and, when he wasn't working, spent the days in a rocking chair on his immaculate front porch.

"Does Jean know he's the father?" my uncle asked. "Will he deny it and humiliate us? Or will he own up to it like a man?"

"I don't know," Marie Micheline said.

"Get up and get dressed," my uncle said. "We're going to have a visit with Monsieur and Madame Pradel."

While Marie Micheline dressed, Tante Denise and Oncle Joseph waited by her bedroom door, not saying a word to each other.

She came out in her oversized white nursing-school uniform. Her belly was undetectable under her clothes, but now she put less effort into hiding it, letting her body move naturally in a way that revealed her struggle with the extra weight. Sandwiched between the only parents she'd ever known, she slowly walked toward the Pradels'.

The meeting didn't last long. When they returned, we could tell by the angry look on Tante Denise and Oncle Joseph's faces and by Marie Micheline's despondent gaze that Jean Pradel had denied being the father.

"See what you get when you lie down with pigs," Tante Denise said loud enough for the Pradels to hear as they sat huddled at a table by their front door.

"Get your things," she told Marie Micheline. "I'm sending you to my sister-in-law. We'll give you money and food. You can come back when the baby's born."

"Let's not be rash," Oncle Joseph interjected. "We can go back and see what the boy says. He obviously hadn't told his parents and was taken by surprise."

"This is women's business," Tante Denise said. "Let me take care of it."

We were not allowed to say goodbye to Marie Micheline when she left the next day to move in with Liline's mother, in a distant and destitute part

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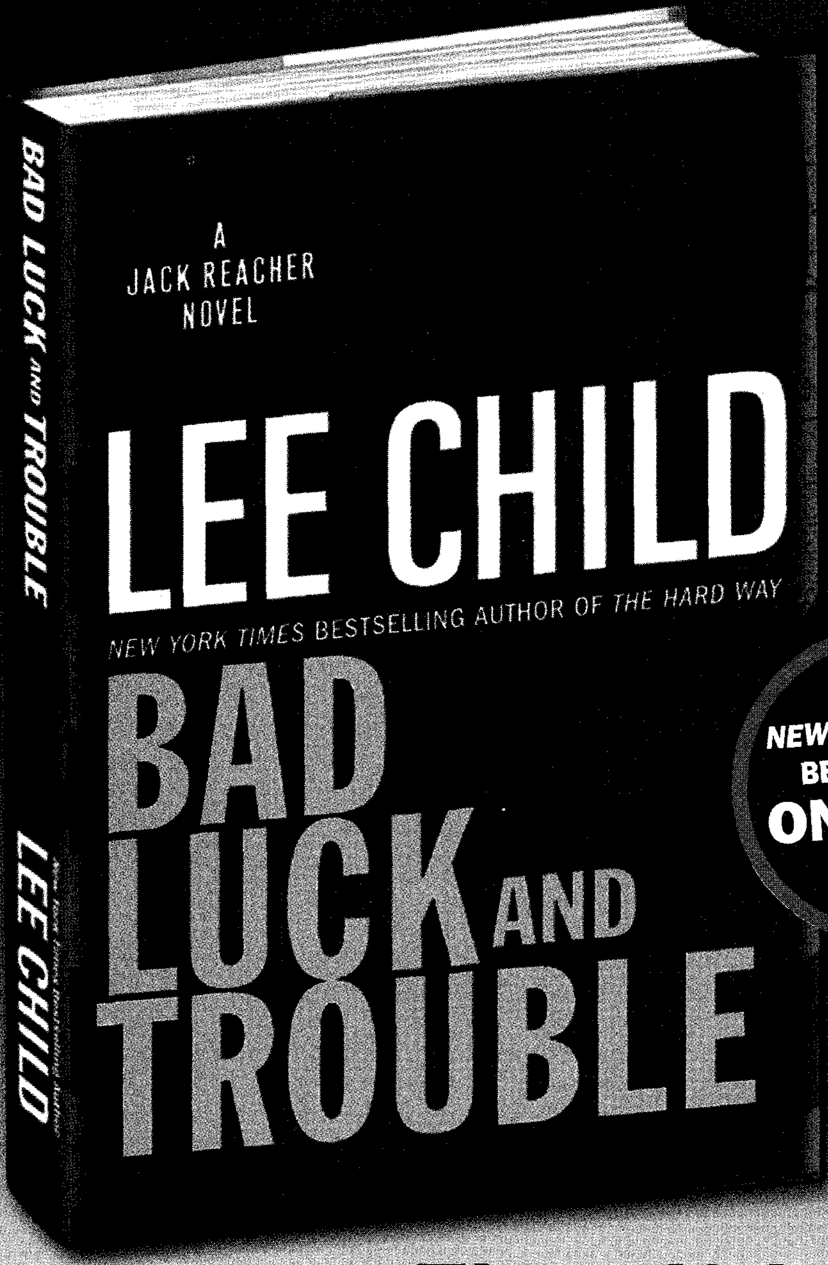
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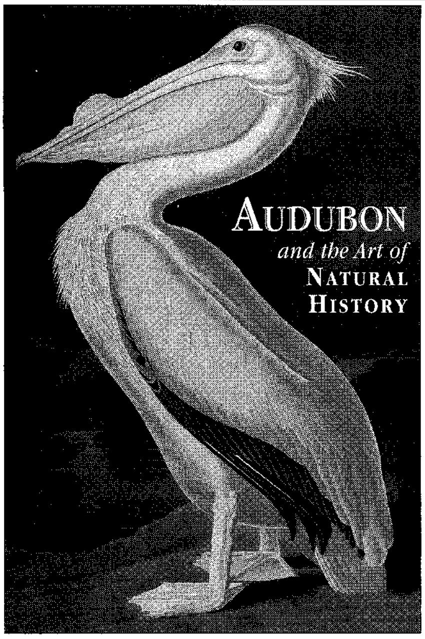
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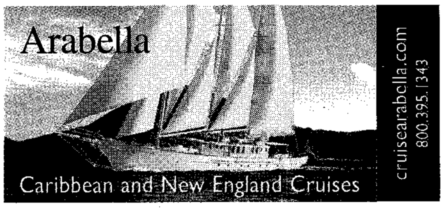
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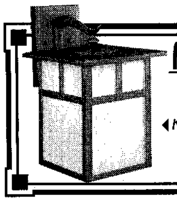
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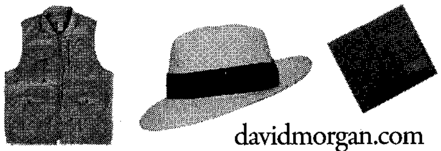
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of town. Soon, the Pradels sent Jean to Montreal, where he had some relatives, and we never saw him again.

During the two months that Marie Micheline was gone, Oncle Joseph and Tante Denise visited her several times, but they never took any of us children with them. After one of the visits, I overheard Tante Denise telling her sister Léone that Marie Micheline had married.

"Who'd marry a pregnant girl?" Léone asked.

"A kind man who wants to give an abandoned child a name," Tante Denise answered proudly.

"He must want something," Léone countered.

The next piece of news was that Marie Micheline's baby had been born, a healthy girl. My uncle rented a small apartment in our neighborhood for Marie Micheline, her new husband, Pressoir Marol, and the child, whose name was Ruth. He paid a few months' rent and Pressoir was supposed to take over after that.

We knew little about Marie Micheline's husband except his name, and the fact that he was in his thirties. I overheard my uncle telling one of his friends that Pressoir spoke some Spanish, which indicated that he might have spent time working as a cane laborer or construction worker either in Cuba or in the Dominican Republic. The fact that he walked with a slight limp also hinted at the possibility of an injury acquired doing that type of work.

Marie Micheline, Pressoir, and the baby often came to eat at my uncle's house. As she walked from her place to ours, Marie Micheline would have to pass the Pradels', where Monsieur Pradel was usually sitting out on the porch, either pedalling his sewing machine or watching the street.

One afternoon, she stopped right in front of him and waited for him to look up and acknowledge her. When he didn't, she turned the baby's tiny face toward him and said, "I'm not interested in Jean anymore, Monsieur Pradel. Wherever he is, I just want him to acknowledge his daughter."

"Don't you already have a husband?" Monsieur Pradel asked scornfully.

Pressoir, waiting on our front gallery, overheard this exchange. He was wearing the denim uniform of the Tonton Macoutes—which, as we now discovered, he had joined before he met Marie Micheline. He was also wearing the Macoutes' signature reflective sunglasses, which completely hid his eyes. Enraged, he dove toward Marie Micheline and grabbed her by the elbow, nearly shaking Ruth out of her grasp. He hadn't yet been assigned a gun, which is perhaps the only reason that he didn't shoot both Marie Micheline and Monsieur Pradel on the spot.

"You whore, you shameless *bouzen!*" he yelled as he pushed Marie Micheline into our house.

My uncle went to Marie Micheline's aid. By then, Ruth had woken up and was wailing.

"What's happening here?" My uncle seemed as perplexed by Marie Micheline's sobs as he was by Pressoir's menacing uniform. "You're a Macoute?" he asked Pressoir, with shock and disapproval.

Pressoir ignored the question. "My wife will no longer be coming here," he said. "From now on, if you want to see her and the baby you'll have to come to us."

Tante Denise stumbled out of the kitchen and wiped the sweat from her crinkled forehead with a corner of the flowered scarf that was wrapped around her head. "What are you saying?" she asked. "She's our daughter. This is our grandchild."

"Just what I said," Pressoir replied. "I thought she was coming here to see you. That's not what she's doing. So she's no longer allowed to come."

Two days later, Pressoir moved Marie Micheline and Ruth from the home that my uncle had rented for them. He left word with the landlord that he now had a gun and bullets and that Marie Micheline was forbidden to see anyone. To keep us from finding her, he moved her constantly, staying with other Macoutes for days at a time, sometimes separating her from her baby, and placing Ruth in the temporary care of strangers.

My uncle eventually managed to track them down, near the ocean a few miles south of Port-au-Prince, and he visited them when Pressoir was away. When Pressoir heard that he'd been there, he moved them again.

After two months with no word, my uncle finally learned—from a family friend who lived in the same area—that Marie Micheline was on the outskirts of Latounèl, a small village in the mountains of Léogane. He decided that whatever the risks he would go there and bring her home.

Climbing the rugged mountain trails on a borrowed mule, my uncle thought that he'd never make it to the village. The mule had a steady gait, but my uncle was hot and thirsty and covered with sweat; his head and backside ached. But all he could think of was seeing Marie Micheline and the baby again. He blamed himself for having allowed Tante Denise to send her away. Why hadn't he forced her to annul the marriage once he'd learned about it? He should have been more diligent, more suspicious. Who marries a pregnant girl—as Léone had asked—even one as pretty and smart as Marie Micheline?

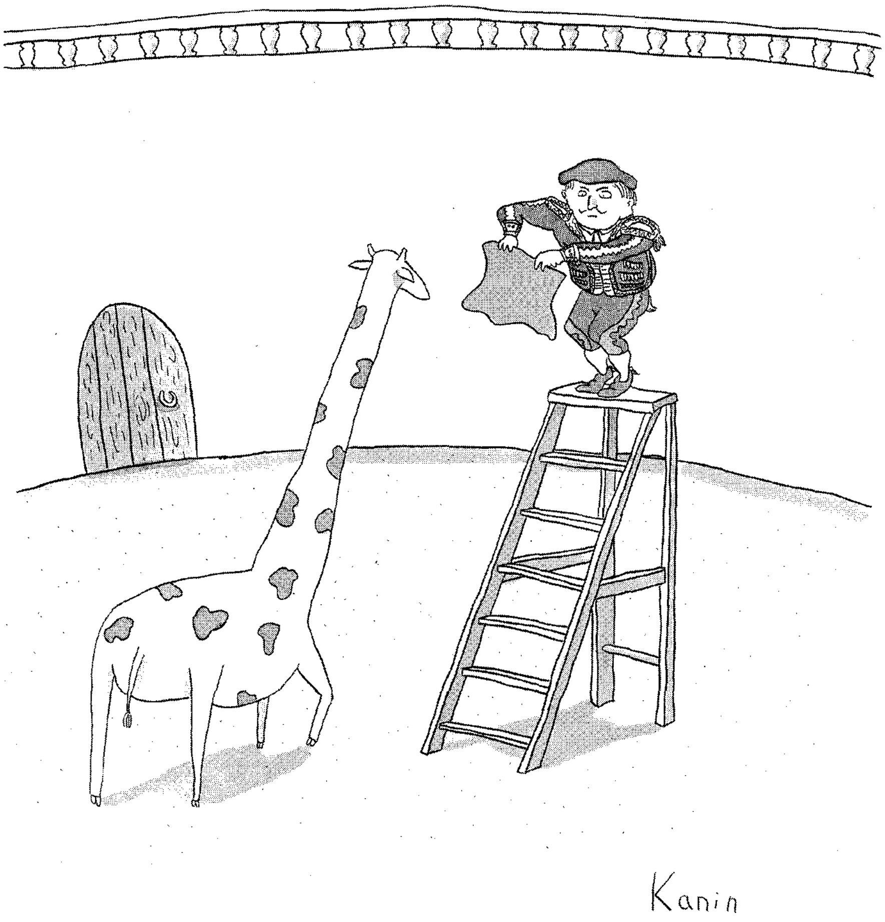
When he reached the village, my uncle went to the house of its highest official, a toothless old man, in his own starched denim uniform and reflective sunglasses.

The Macoutes had a synchronized look, a coarse veneer that made the thin ones seem stocky, the short ones seem tall. In the end, they were all equally intimidating, because they represented the Papa Doc regime. Both Pressoir and this old man had the power to decide whether my uncle would live or die, whether his daughter would live or die.

Fearfully putting his hand on the old man's shoulder, my uncle said, "Father—for your hair is white enough and you're old enough that I can call you father—please help me, another father, free my daughter from her bondage."

He gave the old man the equivalent of five U.S. dollars, which he wished he could get back when the old man said, "Pressoir's a real big chief now, a city Macoute. None of us can cross him. Your daughter isn't the only girl he has in this condition. There are many others. Many."

"Then please, father," my uncle pleaded, trying to maintain his composure. "Do me only this favor. Forget you ever saw me, because I'm not leaving



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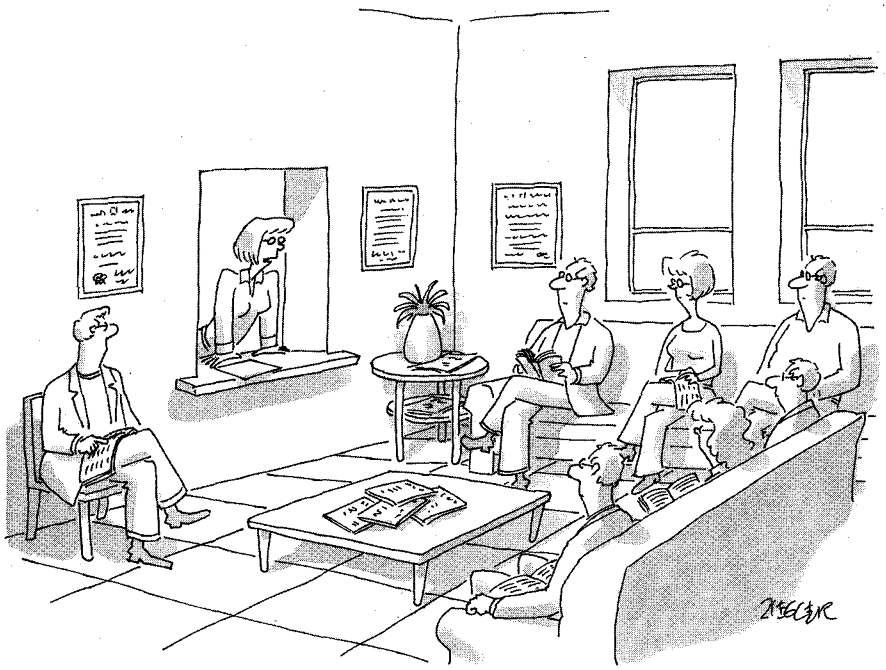

"The doctor would like to know if anyone else out here needs surgery before he puts his stuff away."

• •

without my daughter and her child."

"I won't say anything," the old man said, and pocketed the money. He reluctantly gave my uncle directions to the one-room house where Marie Micheline was living.

My uncle found the house on a nearby hill, secured a secluded grazing spot for his mule nearby, and rested until dusk. As the moon began to peer out of the sky, he watched Pressoir leave in full uniform, perhaps to attend a meeting. His heart was racing. What if there was someone else in the house? What if Pressoir came back? What if he failed and only made things worse for Marie and the baby?

Finally, he built up enough courage to walk down the hill and into the tiny house. Marie Micheline was lying on her back on a woven banana-leaf mat, which, aside from a small earthen jar and a kerosene lamp, was the only thing inside the shack. The limestone walls were covered with sheets of newspaper, snippets of fading bulletins, which he imagined Marie Micheline had read over and over again.

"Let's go," my uncle said, reaching down and pulling her into his arms.

"Papa, is it really you?" she whispered. Now he could see that her legs were covered with open wounds. Her gaunt face was hot and moist. She had a fever.

"He beat me. He beat me on my legs, with a broom, with fire stones, when I tried to escape." She began to cry, her tears even warmer on his arm than her skin.

"Where's Ruth?" he asked.

She pointed out the door, toward another hill. The baby was with a family down the road, she whispered. "They're good. They will give her to me," she said.

"Let's go, then." As they walked out the door, she stumbled, catching herself just in time before falling. As he held her now, Marie Micheline felt to him, he thought, as she had when Guillermo had first placed her in his arms as a baby, trusting him always to look after her, to keep her from harm.

"Papa," Marie Micheline whispered, her mouth so close to his ears that her breath burned his skin. "Papa, even though men cannot give birth, you just gave birth tonight. To me."

In the summer of 1988—seven years after my brother and I finally joined our parents in New York and two years after the end of the Duvalier dictatorship, which over the course of three decades had passed from François, Papa Doc, to his son Jean-Claude, or Baby Doc—my uncle sold his first house, where Marie Micheline, Liline, and my brother and I had lived with him and Tante Denise. The house was beginning to fall apart and the children had all grown up and left. He built a smaller, three-bedroom apartment for Tante Denise and himself in the courtyard behind his church. He also got a home telephone for the first time, which he often used to call us in New York. Sometimes I'd call him just to catch up on things—his life, Tante Denise, the political news from Haiti. He was expanding his work, he said. He had added to the school and the church a clinic that was run by Marie Micheline, who had completed her studies and had been the head nurse at a government clinic before coming to work for my uncle.

Marie Micheline and Oncle Joseph were now closer than ever. She was thirty-six years old, but judging by the photographs I saw of her she looked no older than she had at twenty-two. She'd had three boys after Ruth, with two men who, as my uncle put it, had not loved her enough. My uncle forgave. He loved her deeply, unconditionally. Unlike Tante Denise, who thought that she was spoiled, Oncle Joseph believed that she could do no wrong.

"She needs to realize that she's not a girl playing with boys anymore," Tante Denise would say.

"She attracts bad, just like she did with Pressoir Marol," Oncle Joseph would say, "but she's not a bad person."

When Jean-Claude Duvalier fled to France, he had left a military junta in charge of Haiti. The junta, which ruled for two years, was led by an ambitious Army officer, General Henri Namphy. A new President, Leslie Manigat, was sworn in on February 7, 1988. Four months after he took power, however, Manigat was ousted by Namphy. In September, Namphy was himself deposed by a military rival, General Prosper Avril. In April, 1989, a group of former Tonton Macoutes and hard-line Duvalier loyalists tried to topple Avril in a failed coup, which created hostilities within the Army. The battle between the opposing military factions

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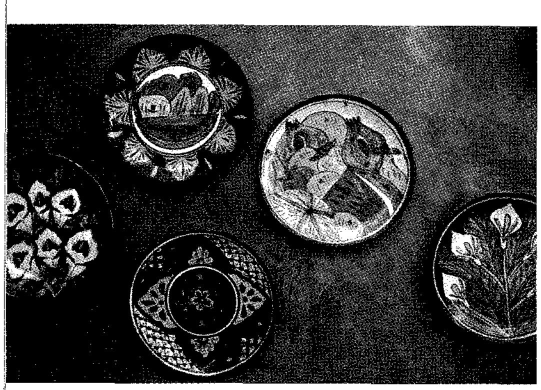

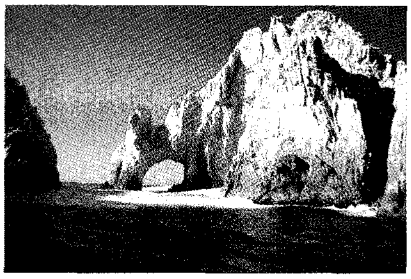

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At the tip of the Baja California peninsula, **Los Cabos** is a meeting of twin towns. The mission town San José del Cabo, a lush, peaceful retreat, retains its eighteenth-century roots, while high-spirited Cabo San Lucas attracts round-the-clock revelers. East of Los Cabos, the port of **Mazatlán** has unveiled a refurbished city center, which includes nearly five hundred buildings designated as national historic landmarks, and features an array of shops, museums, art galleries, and restaurants.

Along the Pacific Coast, **Puerto Vallarta**, in the state of Jalisco, made headlines when Richard Burton romanced Elizabeth Taylor there while he filmed "Night of the Iguana" in the early nineteen-sixties. Today, art galleries and fine dining establishments are the star of this luxurious resort town. In the state of Guerrero, the enchanting fishing village of **Zihuatanejo** forms a contrast to the trend-setting style of neighboring beach retreat, **Ixtapa**. Spice ships and pirates have left their imprint on **Acapulco**, and visitors can explore the resort's storied past at the refurbished pentagonal fort, the Fuerte de San Diego, now home to the Museo Histórico de Acapulco. Eco-tourists flock to **Huatulco**, in the state of Oaxaca, where nine bays of sapphire water and more than thirty beaches invite close company with nature, from hiking and biking expeditions to reef diving.

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CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: PAINTED PLATES, SAN JOSE DEL CABO ©DAVID SANGER PHOTOGRAPHY/ALAMY; CAR AT THE BEACH, COZUMEL ©B&Y PHOTOGRAPHY/ALAMY; GIRL IN PUERTO VALLARTA ©TRAVIS ROWAN/ALAMY; MAN WITH HUICHOL MASK ©LEE FOSTER/ALAMY; EL ARCO, CABO SAN LUCAS ©STEVE BLY/ALAMY

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came to Bel Air one afternoon, when one group chased the other to the street that ran past the wrought-iron gate of the church clinic. Marie Micheline was alone inside the clinic, going over the notes she'd taken on the twenty or so patients she'd seen that day. They had all been minor cases, for once—mostly cuts and scrapes, two infants with low-grade fevers—and she hadn't had to send anyone to the public hospital.

She was probably just reaching over to slip the files into the small metal cabinet beside her when she heard one gunshot, followed by a volley of bullets. Looking up, she would have seen a whirl of camouflage racing by the open metal gate. At this point, she may have thought of the forty people who, according to newspaper reports, had died in the past two weeks, caught in the crossfire in such battles all over Port-au-Prince. She may have thought of Ruth or of her three young sons, Pouchon, Marc, and Ronald, who were due back from school at any time. She may have thought of Tante Denise, to whom she was supposed to give an insulin shot for her diabetes that afternoon. Or of Oncle Joseph, whose blood pressure she monitored daily.

She got up from her desk and ran to the gate, likely hoping to close it before one of the soldiers barged in. But what if someone needed her help? And how would she feel if Ruth, Pouchon, Marc, or Ronald were shot because the gate was locked? Neighbors saw her standing in the doorway with beads of sweat gathering on her forehead. Then a bullet whizzed by, bouncing off the gate with a spark.

The street was suddenly blurry; a cloud of dust descended in the wake of speeding military pickup trucks. Had she been shot? In the heart? She clutched her chest and fell to the floor. She never regained consciousness.

Because Ron Howell, a New York journalist, happened to be covering the military shoot-out in Bel Air that afternoon, Marie Micheline's death was the subject of a *Newsday* article published on April 17, 1989. Titled "Haiti Still Struggling to Shine," it was printed next to a photograph of her funeral procession, slowly winding through downtown Port-au-Prince. Marie Micheline, Howell wrote, had been in many ways "a reflection of Haiti and its potential, a flicker of light frustrated in its attempt to shine."

When you hear that someone you haven't seen in a long time has died, it's not difficult to pretend that it hasn't really happened, that the person is continuing to live just as she did before, in your absence, out of your sight. The day of Marie Micheline's funeral, I spoke to my uncle on the phone, and I told him a story that I'd just remembered. When I was eight years old, still in Haiti, I carried a note home from school requesting that a parent or guardian come to school the next day to spank me in front of the class, because for the first time I hadn't finished my homework. I gave Marie Micheline the note, thinking that she'd go easier on me than Oncle Joseph or Tante Denise. The next morning, when she got to the school, Marie Micheline took my very slim and prim teacher, Ms. Sanon, aside, and, under an almond tree in a corner of the bustling recess yard, whispered in her ear for five minutes.

"What did you tell her?" I asked Marie Micheline as she walked me back to class with a broad smile on her face.

I gripped her soft, small hands, unable to imagine them beating me with the stiff leather whip, the *rigwaz*, with which parents were asked to thrash their children's behinds.

"I'm going to take care of her and her entire family very well at the government clinic for a year," she said. "They'll never have to wait and they'll never have to pay the fee. In return, she won't send anyone in your class home with spanking letters for a month."

"Just a month?" I asked.

"That's the best I could do," she said.

Before she was buried, a coroner determined that Marie Micheline had died from a heart attack. But when I spoke to Tante Denise, who cried as though she were hollering to the heavens in protest, she said that no one could convince her of anything but the simpler truth: that watching the bullets fly, watching the rapid unravelling of her country, Marie Micheline had been frightened to death. ♦

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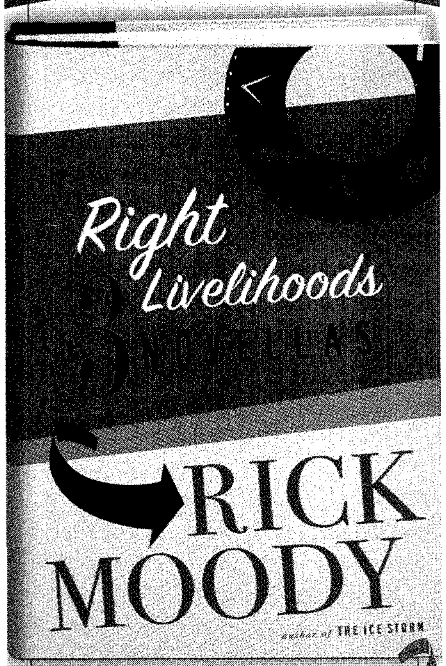

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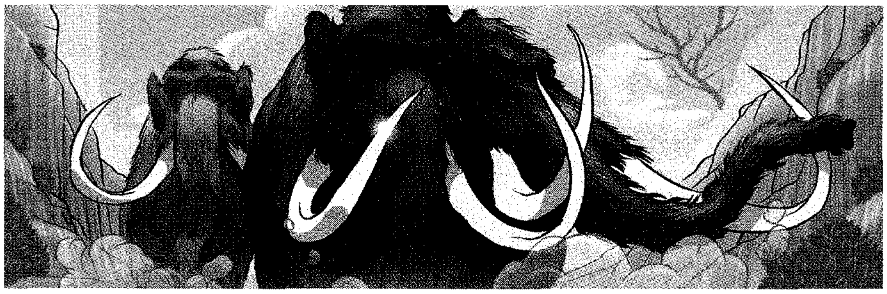
SUMMER MOVIES

ICE CREAM AND ASHES

Summer movies aren't about summer and they don't have to open during the summer movie-theatre doldrums. For me, they're the movies that come up in conversation at night with friends on the porch or during a long drive, or even late in bed when somebody says, "What was the name of that movie where the cow falls down a well and everybody's looking for that famous old Irish tenor who's disappeared and—wait a minute, it's, it's—" And you say, "Oh, my God, yes, it was—I *know* this—it was Ned Beatty!" And the first person says, "Yeah, got it now—Ned Beatty, can you believe? In 'Hear My Song.' I think it was English or maybe Irish but, you know, not *Irish*. Great movie, remember?"

Summer movies aren't classics and don't always make money, but they make friends. Some of them are counter-classics, like "Remember the Night," the 1940 Barbara Stanwyck–Fred MacMurray thing that isn't "Double Indemnity." This time, Fred is a young New York prosecutor who's about to send Barbara away for a jewelry-store shoplifting rap when the trial goes into Christmas recess. Barbara has no place to stay for the holiday, and so Fred, what else, takes her along to his Indiana home, where Mom (Beulah Bondi) and the tree and popcorn and songs around the piano and love and tears are waiting; the script is by Preston Sturges, so not to worry. Other summer movies—I'm thinking of "Tremors," that 1990 Kevin Bacon-vs.-underground-monster-worms battle—start off small and end up in multiple sequels and play all year round on back-channel TV. "Trees Lounge," by contrast, opened and disappeared in a nanosecond in 1996, leaving only a handful of fanly conservators to recall Steve Buscemi (who wrote and directed it as well) as a shaky alcoholic slowly driving an ice-cream truck around Valley Stream, Long Island, and making out with the junior-teen Chloë Sevigny.

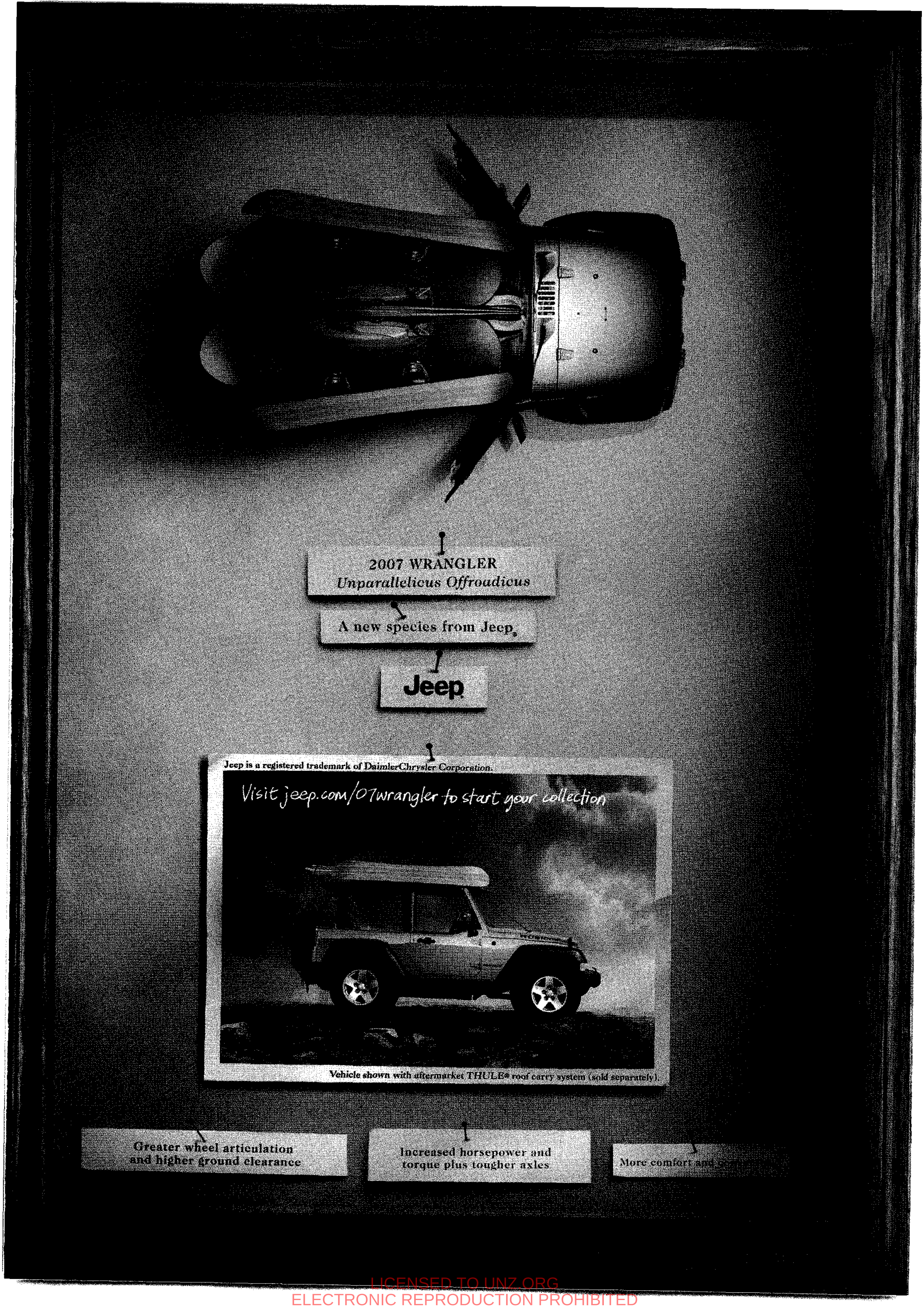
Another summer movie that sneaks into mind—one of its devotees was the late Saul Steinberg—is pre-suburban by about eighty thousand years. Without access to Con Ed, members of the Ulam tribe have to carry their light and power around with them in a small basket containing smoldering coals. When a careless elder Ulam slips while crossing a swamp and drowns the spark, there's a crisis. Three strong pithecan homeys are dispatched to find and grab off a fresh ember or burning branch from their nearest heat-keeping neighbors, hundreds or perhaps thousands of miles away, who will mash them with a boulder or have them for lunch if they fail. This, in a gourd-shell, is the story line of "Quest for Fire," a captivating 1982 French-Canadian caveman movie, which was recently retrieved via Netflix and, by popular demand, played two nights in a row at my place. No subtitles are offered, since the film's language, created by Anthony Burgess, comes largely in grunts, but *different* grunts, depending on tribe. The actors' primitive lopings and body language and their styles in rock warfare were choreographed by the celebrity ethnologist Desmond Morris. This exhausts the film's list of stars. Our heroine, Ika (the lithe Rae Dawn Chong), is talkative in a high-pitched-screamy sort of way, coming as she does from the more advanced Ivaka, and she dresses fetchingly in ashes and little—well, actually, nothing—else. Ika knows stuff, like how to make fire with a palm-whirred stick, and—scandalizing the Ulams—frontal sex.



TOMER HANUKA

Being non-ironic, "Quest for Fire" will never remind you of those persistent Geico caveman commercials, but it takes on any built-in resistance to Neanderthal entertainment with suavity—my own disappearing about thirty minutes along, when our three fire hunters are treed by sabre-toothed lions in a bending, inadequate sapling. There's a falling-nut joke a little later, though the director, Jean-Jacques Annaud, isn't after laughs but emotions: long, sweeping shots of thickly vacant landscapes, dotted at one corner by a minute campfire (the movie was shot in Canada and Scotland and Kenya); an unexpectedly charming herd of woolly mammoths; and the prognathous Ron Perlman picking at a bone as he awaits the dawn of cogitation. There are wolves and bears but no dinosaurs, and Annaud has you holding your breath when the hairy Naoh (Everett McGill) nervously throws a stick at a low, menacing apparition he's not seen before: a hut. "Quest for Fire," it turned out, was never quite a box-office hit, and it wasn't solemn or cheesy enough for a cult. Catching it again, you remember the terrific music (by Philippe Sarde) and the kick, back then, of finding friends of yours who had also just come upon this strange little flick for the first time and were dying to talk.

—*Roger Angell*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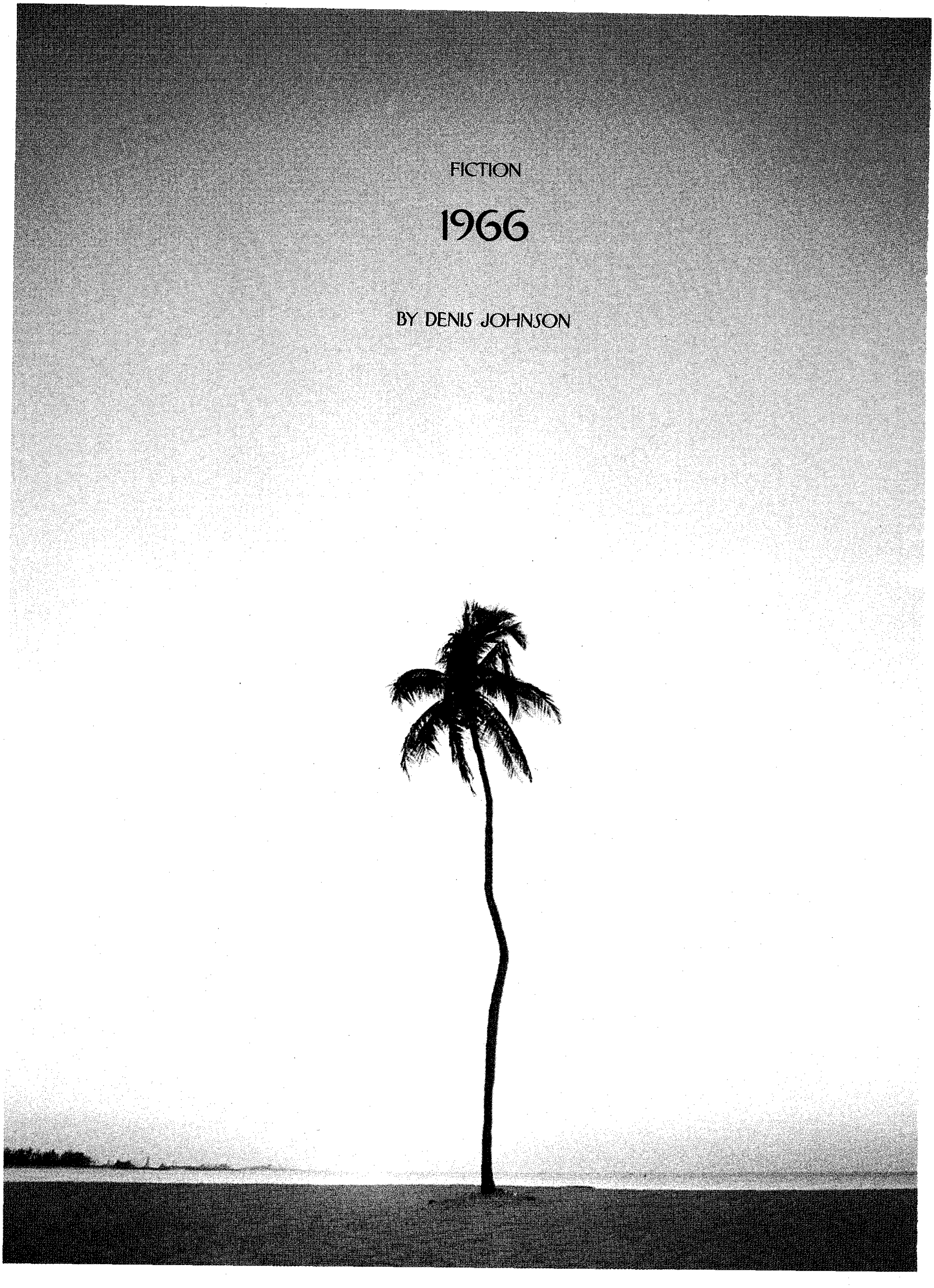


BASTIENNE SCHMIDT, "PALM TREE" (2004); JOSEPH STERLING, "THE AGE OF ADOLESCENCE" (1959-64)/STEPHEN DAITER GALLERY

Bill Houston's Honolulu shore leave commenced with the forenoon watch, too early for a man with money to spend: on top of everything, the Navy wished to deny him any night life. He took a shuttle bus from the naval station, across the open fields of the Air Force base, then through town to Waikiki Beach, and wandered dejected among the big hotels, sat on the sand in his Levi's and wild Hawaiian shirt and very clean shoes—white bucks with red rubber soles—ate grilled pork on a wooden skewer at a kiosk, took a city bus to Richards Street, booked a bed at the Armed Services Y.M.C.A., and started drinking in the waterfront bars at one in the afternoon.

He tried an air-conditioned place favored by young officers, where he sat at a table by himself smoking Lucky Strikes and drinking Lucky Lager. It made him feel lucky. When he'd collected enough change, he called home to the mainland, chatted with his younger brother James.

That just made him more depressed. His brother James was stupid. His brother James was going to end up in the military, too.

He strolled the waterfront with the beer thudding inside his head, a lonely feeling pulling at his heart. By 3 P.M., the pavement of Honolulu had baked so hot it sucked at his rubber shoe soles as he walked.

He hid inside the Big Surf Club, trading beers with two men slightly older than he was, one of them a man named Kinney, who'd recently joined the crew on Houston's ship—the U.S.N.S. Bonners Ferry, a T2 tanker manned mostly by civilians, of whom Kinney was one. But he hadn't just waltzed on board for a tropical cruise. He'd spent time in the Navy, had lived on ship after ship, and had no real home ashore. This afternoon, Kinney had attached himself to a barefoot beach bum who seemed hopped up on something. The bum bought the table two pitchers in a row and eventually revealed that he'd served in the Third Marines in Vietnam before landing back home on an early discharge. "Yeah, baby," the bum said. "I got the medical."

"Why?"

"Why? Because I'm mentally disabled."

"You seem all right."

"You seem all right if you buy us a beer," Kinney said.

"No problem. I'm on disability. Two forty-two a month. I can drink a serious amount of Hamm's, man, if I sleep on the beach like a moke and eat what the mokes eat."

"What do the mokes eat? Who are the mokes?"

"Around here you got the mokes and the howlies. We are the howlies. The mokes are the native fuckers. What do they eat? They eat cheap. Then, there's a whole lot of Japs and Chinks, you probably noticed. They're in the gook category. You know why gook food stinks so bad? Because they fry it up with rat turds and roaches and whatever else gets in with the rice. They don't care. You ask them what the fuck stinks around here and they don't even know what you're talking about. Yeah, I've seen some things," the bum went on. "Over there, the gooks wear these funny straw hats, you probably seen them—they're pointy? Girls riding on a bicycle, you grab their hat when you go by and you just about yank their head off because they're tied with a string. Yank her right off the bike, man, and she goes fucked up in the mud. I saw one this one time where she was all bent like this, man. Her neck was snapped. She was dead."

Bill Houston was completely confused. "What? Where?"

"Where? In South Vietnam, man, in Bien Hoa. Right in the middle of town, practically."

"That's fucked up, man."

"Yeah? And it's fucked up when one of them honeys tosses a grenade in your lap because you let her get up beside you on the road, man. They know the rules. They know they should keep their distance. The ones who don't keep their distance, they probably have a grenade."

Houston and Kinney kept quiet. They had nothing comparable to talk about. The guy drank his beer. A moment almost like sleep came over them. Still nobody had spoken, but the bum said, as if answering something, "That ain't nothing. I've seen some things."

"Well, let's see some beer," Kinney said. "Ain't it your round?"

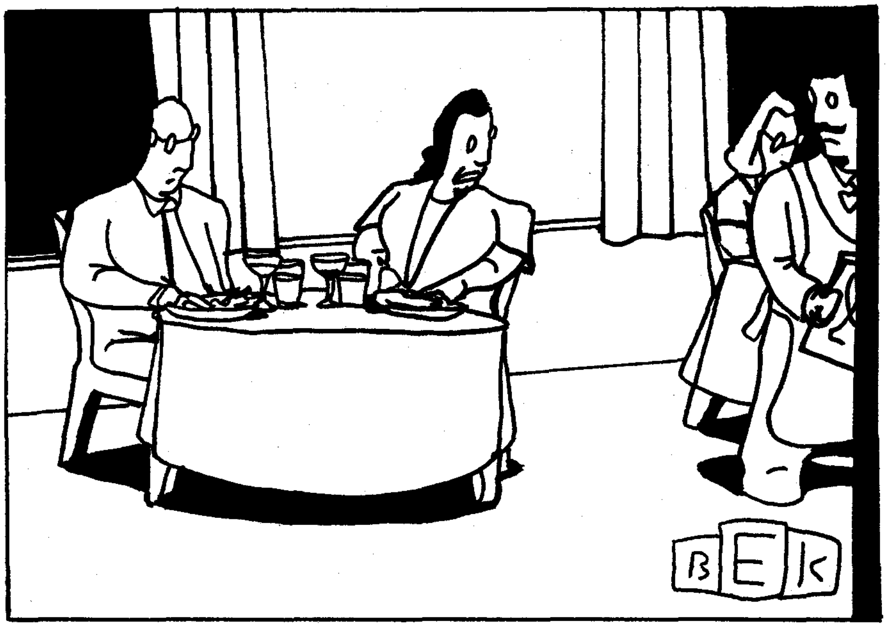
The bum didn't seem to remember who'd bought what. He kept the pitchers coming.

James Houston came home from the last day of his third year in high school. Got off the bus raising his middle finger at the driver and whooping.

His mother had caught a ride out to work and left the truck in the driveway, as he'd asked her to. His little brother, Burris, stood in the driveway with a finger in one of his ears, peering down the barrel of a cap pistol while he pulled the trigger repeatedly.

"Watch your eyes, Burris. I've heard of a kid got a spark in his eye and he had to go to the hospital."

"What are caps made of?"



"Excuse me—I think there's something wrong with this in a tiny way that no one other than me would ever be able to pinpoint."

“Gunpowder.”

“*What? Gun*powder?”

The telephone rang inside.

“I’m not allowed to answer,” Burris said.

“Did they turn the phone back on?”

“I don’t know.”

“Well, it’s ringing, ain’t it?”

“Shut up.”

“Now it done quit, you fool.”

“I wouldn’t answer anyhow. It sounds like bugs talking in there. Not people.”

“You’re a funny feller,” James said, and went inside, where it was hot and smelled a little like garbage. His mother refused to turn on the evaporative cooler unless the temperature got into the hundreds.

He carried a number of papers from school—homework, report card, year-end bulletins. He shoved them into the trash can under the sink.

The phone rang again. It was his brother Bill, Jr.

“Is it hot in Phoenix?”

“It’s almost a hundred, yeah.”

“It’s hot here, too. It’s *sweaty*.”

“Where you calling from?”

“Honolulu, Hawaii. Hour ago I was standing on Waikiki Beach.”

“Honolulu?”

“Yep.”

“Do you see any hula girls?”

“I see a bunch of whores, is all. But I bet they’ll do the hula.”

“I bet they will, too!”

“What do you know about it?”

“Me? I don’t know,” James said. “I was just saying.”

“God damn, I wish I was back in good old Arizona.”

“Well, I’m not the one who reënlisted.”

“You can put me in a nice clean desert anytime you want to. It’s honest heat there, ain’t it? It’s dry and burning. This here’s mushy, is what it is. Hey, kid, imagine this—did you ever lift the lid on a kettle full of boiling sewage? That’s what it’s like stepping out on the street in this place.”

“So,” James said, “what all else is going on?”

“How old are you, anyway?”

“I’ll be seventeen here pretty quick.”

“What are you gonna do?”

“What am I gonna do? I don’t know.”

“Are you done with school?”

“I don’t know.”

“What do you mean, you don’t know? Did you graduate?”

“I’d have to go one more year to graduate.”

“Ain’t nothing else to do besides graduate, is there?”

“Not where I can see. Or I was thinking about the Army, maybe.”

“Why not the Navy?”

“Too many sailors in the Navy, pard.”

“You’re a wise-ass, pard. Better join the Army, pard. Because you’d just get your ass kicked repeatedly in my branch of the service.”

James was at a loss. He didn’t actually know this guy.

The operator interrupted, and Bill had to deposit more coins.

“Well,” James said, “are you in a bar, or what?”

“Yeah, a bar. I’m in a bar in Honolulu, Hawaii.”

“Well, I guess that’s . . .” He didn’t know what it was.

“Yeah. I been in the Philippines, Hong Kong, Honolulu—let me see, where else? I don’t know—and the tropics ain’t no tropical paradise, I’m saying. It’s full of rot—bugs, sweat, stink, and I don’t know what all else. And most of the beautiful tropical fruit you see, it’s rotten—it’s mashed on the street.”

James said, “Well . . . I’m glad you called.”

“Yeah,” Bill said.

“O.K.”

“O.K.,” Bill said. “Hey, tell Mom I called, O.K.? And tell her I said hi.”

“O.K.”

“O.K. . . . Tell her I love her.”

“O.K. So long.”

“Hey. Hey. James.”

“Yeah?”

“You still there?”

“I’m still here.”

“Go in the Marines, man.”

“Aah, them are overrated.”

“The Marines get a sword.”

“The Marines are really the Navy,” James said. “Part of the Navy.”

“Yeah . . . Well . . .”

“Well . . .”

“Only the officers get a sword, anyway,” Bill said.

“Yeah.”

“Well, I gotta go get laid,” Bill said.

“Get some!”

“What do you know about it?” his brother said, laughing as he hung up.

James searched the kitchen drawers and found a half pack of his mother’s Salems. Before he got out the door the phone rang—Bill, Jr.

“Is it you again?”

“Last time I looked, yeah.”

“What’s up?”

“Say hi to South Mountain for me.”

“We don’t see South Mountain no more. We see the Papago Buttes.”

“On the east side?”

“We’re on East McDowell.”

“East McDowell?”

“Ain’t that the shits?”

“You’re out in the desert!”

“Mom’s working on a horse ranch.”

“I’ll be God-damned.”

“She knows about horses from when she was a little girl.”

“Watch out the Gila monster don’t bite you.”

“There ain’t much shade, but it’s nice. We’re right up near the Pima Reservation.”

“And you’re in school.”

“I been at Palo Verde for a while, since about October, maybe.”

“Palo Verde?”

“Yeah.”

“Palo Verde?”

“Yeah.”

“When we lived over on South Central, our school used to play Palo Verde in basketball or something, or football. What was the name of our school that time?”

“I went to the elementary. Carson Elementary.”

“I’ll be God-damned. I can’t remember the name of my own high school I went to.”

“Ain’t that the shits?”

“Do you ever get to Florence?”

“Nope.”

“Do you ever see Dad?”

“Nope,” James said. “He ain’t my dad, is why.”

“Well, you stay out of trouble. Learn by his example.”

“I don’t follow none of his examples. I don’t even look at his examples.”

“Well,” Bill, Jr., said, “anyway . . .”

“Anyway. Yeah. Are you really on Waikiki Beach?”

“Not really. Not right now.”

“We’re right about at Fifty-second and McDowell. They have a zoo over here.”

“A what?”

“Yeah, a little zoo.”

"Hey, tell Mom something—when is she gonna be home?"

"Later. A couple hours."

"Maybe I'll call her. I wanna tell her about something. There's two guys on my ship from Oklahoma, so, anyway, you know what they both said? Said I sound like Oklahoma. I said, 'Well, sir, I never been—but my people are.' Tell Mom that, O.K.?"

"I'll do that."

"Tell her she started me in Oklahoma, and I come out like I'm from there."

"O.K."

"O.K.—that's short for Oklahoma!"

"I'll be God-damned," James said.

"Yeah. Ain't that the shits?"

"O.K."

"O.K. So long."

They hung up.

Drunk as a lord, James thought. Probably an alkie, like his father.

Burris marched in with his cap gun in one hand and a Popsicle in the other, wearing his short pants and nothing else, looking like a little stick man. "I think I got a spark in my eye."

James said, "I gotta get going."

"Does it look like I got a spark in my eye?"

"No. Shut up, you peculiar little feller."

"Can I ride in the back of the truck?"

"Not unless you want to get bumped out and killed."

He showered and changed, and just as he was going out the phone rang. His brother again.

"Hey . . . James."

"Yeah."

"Hey. Hey. Hey."

James hung up and left the house.

James picked up Charlotte, and then Rollo, and then a girl Rollo liked named Stevie Dale, short for Stephanie, and they drove out toward the McDowell Mountains looking for a party they'd heard about, a wild, unchaperoned outdoor affair, supposedly, off the road and out in the desert away from anything; but if such a gathering was actually being held it was lost in a maze of dry washes, and they steered back to the highway and sat in the bed of the pickup drinking beer. "Couldn't you get it no colder?" James asked.

"I stole it from the icebox in the barn," Rollo said.

"Can't even find a party on graduation night," James said.

"This isn't graduation night," Charlotte said.

"What is it, then?"

"It's the last day of school. I'm not graduating. Are you graduating?"

"Warm beer," James said.

"I'll never graduate," Charlotte said. "I don't care."

Rollo said, "Yeah, who gives a flying fuck," and they all laughed at his vulgarity, and he said, "We're country kids."

"No, we ain't," James said.

"Your mother works on a horse ranch. My dad messes with irrigation. And there's a great big barn behind my house, pardner."

"It's nicer out here," Stevie Dale said. "No cops."

"That's true," James said. "Ain't nobody to bother you."

"Just mind the snakes."

"Mind this snake," Rollo said, and the girls laughed.

It was a disappointment to James that when the two girls laughed Charlotte had to be the one who forced beer out her nose. Stevie was younger, just a freshman, but she seemed simpler and not so nervous. Stevie kept her back straight, and she smoked in a sexy way. What was he doing with Charlotte? Actually, it was Stevie that he liked.

He dropped Rollo off, and then he drove Charlotte home. Stevie kind of ended up still in the truck. He made sure to let Charlotte off first.

He kissed her goodbye as they stood out front of her house. She locked her arms behind his neck and clung to him, her lips slack and wet. James held her with his left arm only, and let the right one dangle. Charlotte's older brother, out of work, came and stared from the doorway. "Shut the door or turn off the damn cooler, you fool," her mother called from within.

James asked Stevie, "You need to go home?"

"Not exactly," she said. "Not really."

"You want to drive around?"

"Sure. That might be nice."

They ended up right back where they'd been with the others an hour before, looking out at the low mountains, listening to the radio.

"What's your plans for the summer?" Stevie said.

"I'm waiting on a sign."

"That means you don't have any," she said.

"Any what?"

"Any plans."

"I don't know if I should aim for just a summer job or find something real and permanent—just not go back to school."

"You mean drop out?"

"I was thinking I'd get in the service, like my dad."

She made no response to this idea. She placed her fingertip on the dashboard and rubbed it back and forth.

James was entirely out of conversation. His neck felt so taut he doubted he could even turn his head. Not one word occurred to him to say.

He wished she'd say something about Charlotte. All she said was "What are you so sulky about?"

"Shit."

"What?"

"I think I gotta break up with Charlotte. I really have to."

"Yeah . . . I'd say she probably feels it coming."

"Really? She does?"

"You're just not lit up around her, James, not at all."

"You can tell, huh?"

"You've got a cloud raining down all around you."

"What about right now this minute?"

"What?"

"Ain't raining down on me right this minute, is it?"

"No." She was smiling. She was the sun. "Are you really going into the service?"

"Yep. The Army or the Marines. I guess you're gonna let me kiss you now, ain't you?"

She laughed. "You're funny."

He kissed her a long time, and then she said, "That's what I like about you. You're funny when you're happy. And you're good-looking—that's one thing, too," and they spent a while kissing, until a commercial came on the radio, and he spent some time with the dial.

"Hmm," she said.

"What is it, Stevie?"

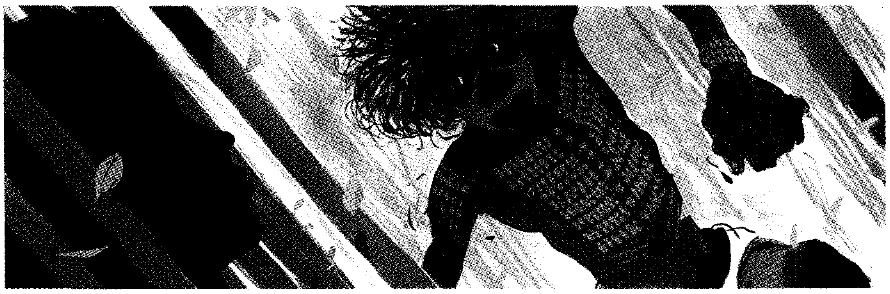
"I'm trying to think, Does this man kiss like the Army or like the Marines? Hmm," she said, kissing him. She broke away. "Maybe the U.S. Air Force."

He kissed her and very gently touched her arms, her cheeks, her neck. He knew better than to put his hands

SUMMER MOVIES

WALKABOUT

Odd, in a way, that we should have something called “the summer movie.” The temperature-controlled timelessness of movie theatres should argue against seasonal categories. Back in the days of drive-ins, with the car window down to admit the croaking speaker, it was possible to notice the humidity. Inevitably, too, an insect would crawl across the projector’s lens and be magnified on the screen. A bug that big would remind you that it was summer.



FRANK STOCKTON

But inside a theatre it could be any season at all. Maybe that’s why, thinking about summer movies, I find myself returning not to a first-run cinema rumbling with some blockbuster’s rigged detonations but to the ballroom of our old yacht club in Detroit. In that vast, velvet-draped space, whenever a boozy regatta party didn’t intervene, movies were shown. One July evening, my mother and I ended up at an Australian film we knew nothing about beyond its mystifying title: “Walkabout.”

Summer explained why we were alone together. My oldest brother, a folk musician, worked nights. My father and my other brother were racing our sailboat up to Mackinac. And so my mother and I got into her car—which used to be my father’s until it got old and temperamental—and made the long drive into the city.

“The oil light’s on,” I said, as we were crossing the Belle Isle bridge.

“It does that,” my mother said.

The film began unthreateningly. A father drives his children, a teen-age daughter and young son, into the outback. At first, all seems well. They picnic. The sister and brother go for a walk. Suddenly, the father fires a gun in their direction. Hiding behind a rock, the girl looks back to see her father dowsing the car with gasoline. In the next second, he immolates the vehicle, along with himself.

Lost in the wilderness, the girl and boy are doomed. But fate intervenes: they meet an Aborigine who is in the midst of the test of manhood known as the walkabout. He hunts game for them and teaches them how to siphon water from the ground. The parched, lizard-ridden landscape becomes lush as they journey. Soon the Aborigine and the girl are cavorting naked in an oasis. Later, as they near civilization, the Aborigine performs a mating dance, to which the girl doesn’t respond, and the next morning she finds that he has hanged himself in a tree.

Two suicides. A lengthy montage of Edenic, but fully frontal, nudity. And all without my mother putting her hand over my eyes. Beyond the wondrous excitement of all this was the message the film conveyed, and for which there existed no better recipient than a twelve-year-old growing up in the wake of the sixties: civilization was evil, technology deracinating, and the only solution a return to nature. I’d had a glimpse into a world of adult seriousness, in which fathers despaired of their lives and children, abandoned, had to fend for themselves.

As we went to our car, my mother and I made appreciative noises about the film in order to disguise the awkwardness of having seen it together. It must have been clear to my mother that she was losing me to all the film depicted, not only to sexuality but to a life without a parental center. The film’s suggestion, that a father wasn’t something to be counted on, we left unvoiced, but that general idea—of the irrelevancy of fathers—always hovered between a mother and son.

Further exploiting my father’s absence, I rolled down my window. He would never have allowed that—not in the city at night. My father would have secured the doors and windows and turned the air-conditioning on full blast. My mother was too busy to notice. The red oil light had flashed on again. I watched her frowning at it, then turned back to the window.

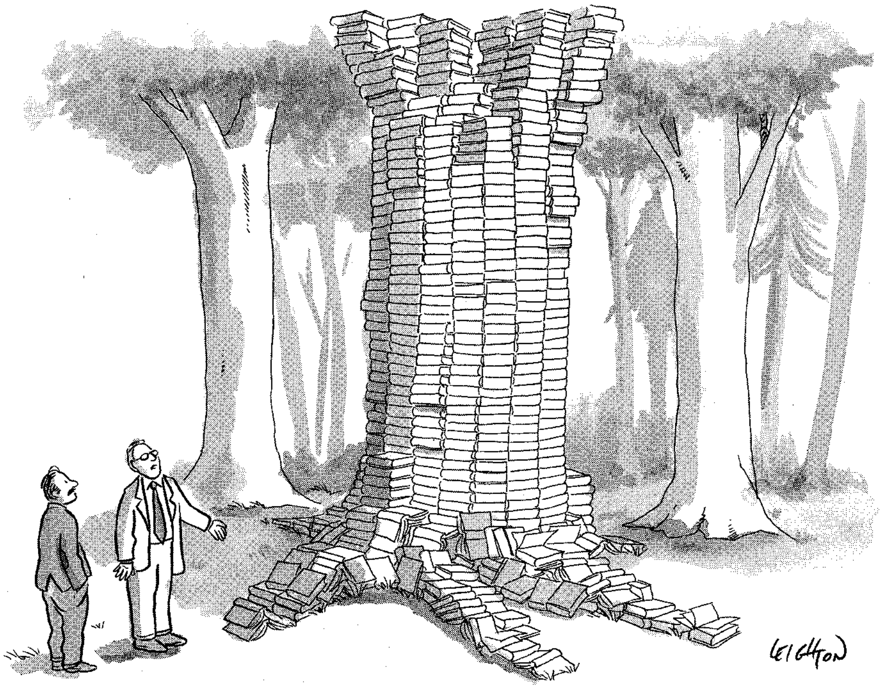
In the reeds along the river, radios were playing. People were lying on blankets on the grass, or dancing together in the gazebos, bottles glinting in their hands.

I was older than I’d been two hours earlier. I was ready to get out of the car right then and there. I could wander into the woods of Belle Isle, go back over the bridge, past the Chrysler factory, all the way downtown. Over to Canada, even. Or south to Toledo. Or at least to college someday. Wherever my walkabout would take me.

“I’ll tell you one thing,” my mother said, rapping her knuckles against the oil light. “I’m about ready to set this car on fire.”

We had a good laugh over that. Outside, I could smell the river, the blowsy cattails, the throat-coating, Kaopectate wind from the cement factory on the opposite shore.

—*Jeffrey Eugenides*



"We used your unsold copies to build a tree, but it's not the same."

• •

where he wanted to. "I've got one warm beer left," he said.

"Go ahead. I'm not thirsty."

He sat against the driver's door, and she against hers. He was glad the sun was setting, so he didn't have to worry what he looked like. Sometimes he wasn't sure the expression on his face made any sense.

Now he had to burp. He just went ahead and did it loudly and said, "Greetings from the interior."

Stevie said, "Your dad's in prison, isn't he?"

"Where'd you get *that* one?"

"Is he?"

"No, that's more my stepdad," James said. "Just some guy, really. He's my mother's fault, not mine."

"And your real dad's in the service, huh?"

James draped his arms over the wheel and rested his chin on them, staring out. So now she suddenly thought they should tell their worst secrets to each other.

He got out and went behind some scrub and took a leak. The sun had dropped behind Camelback Mountain, southwest of them. The sky was still pure blue above, and then at the horizon tinted some other color, a rosy yellow that went away when you looked at it.

Beside her again in the truck he said, "Well, I just made up my mind: I'm joining the Army Infantry."

"Really? The infantry, huh?"

"Yep."

"Then what? Specialize in something?"

"I'm going to get over there to Vietnam."

"And then what?"

"I'm going to fuck up a whole lot of people."

"God," she said. "You're not with the guys here, you know. I'm a female."

"Sorry about that, chief."

She put her hand on the back of his neck and touched his hair tenderly with her fingers. To stop her doing it, he sat up straight.

"That's an awful thing to say, James."

"What?"

"What you said."

"It just came out. I didn't mean it, I don't think."

"Then don't say it."

"Shit. Do you think I'm that evil?"

"Everybody's got a mean side. Just don't feed it till it grows."

They kissed some more.

"Well, anyhow," he said, "what do you feel like doing at the moment?"

"What . . . I don't know. Do we have gas?"

"Yep." It thrilled him that she'd said "we."

"Let's drive around and see what's going on."

"Let's take the long way." That meant that he'd make a serious pass at her.

"O.K." That meant that she wouldn't mind.

James stood out front of the house in the dark as his mother came home from work in Tom Mooney's Chevy convertible, staring out the passenger side with her mouth lagging open, her face hidden by a ragged straw hat, a bandanna protecting her neck. Mooney waved to James, and James dropped his cigarette butt to the earth and stomped it out and waved. By then the Chevy was gone.

She went on inside without a word for her son, this silence both unusual and welcome.

It lasted until he followed her into the kitchen. "If you don't think that ranch has about wore me out, just come feel the muscle a-quivering on this arm. If I heat a can of soup, you better eat it. Don't make me fuss and then just sit there dreaming your dreams." She turned on the kitchen light and stood under it looking small and spent. "I've got bologna and I've got tomaters. Do you want a sandwich? Sit down, and I'll make us soup and sandwiches. Where's Burris?"

"Who?"

"He'll be around. He's always hungry. I lost weight while I carried him to term. I started out one-nineteen, and in my ninth month I was down to one-eleven. He fed on me from the inside." Wiping at her face, she smeared it with dirt from her hand.

"Mom. Wash up before you cook."

"Oh, Lord," she said. "I'm just so tired I forget I'm alive. Open the can for me, hon."

They ate peanut butter and jelly and Campbell's soup.

"I'll cut up this tomater."

"I just ate. I don't want it."

"You've got to have vegetables."

"There's vegetables in the soup. That's why it's called 'Vegetable Soup.' "

"Don't run away. I mean to talk to you. When is your school done for the summer?"

"It finished up today."

"Come to work at the ranch, then."

"I don't know about that."

"What don't you know? Do you know a dollar when you don't see one? Because *I* don't see one."

"I was thinking about the military. Maybe the Army."

"When? Now?"

"I'm seventeen."

"Seventeen and crazy."

"Bill, Jr., was seventeen. You signed for him."

"It didn't hurt him, I suppose."

"He called today."

"He called? What did he say?"

"Nothing. He's in Honolulu."

"I've never seen a dime from him. Not that I'd ever ask it."

"If I get in the Army, I'll send you some."

"Once or twice he sent some money. Not regular. He hasn't lately. And I can't ask him because my pride strangles me."

"I'll send some every payday, I swear," James said.

"You decide that on your own."

"Does that mean you'd sign for me?"

She didn't answer.

He picked up a fork and started eating sliced tomato. "You send me the envelope every month, I'll send you some money back inside it."

"Did you talk to the recruiters yet?"

"I will."

"When?"

"I will."

"Will when?"

"Monday."

"If you have the papers Monday night, and you can show me some good reasons for the service, I might sign. But if you're just dreaming then Tuesday you better wake up and get over to the ranch with me. I got the phone back on, but the rent is waiting on the Lord to move. Where's Burris?"

"He'll come when he's hungry."

"He's always hungry," she said, and began to say all over again the same things she'd just told him, because she was unable not to say them.

His mother was unable to be quiet. She read the Bible all the time. She was too old to be his mother, too worn out and stupid to be his mother.

Bill Houston thoroughly enjoyed beer, but there was a point where it started to stick in his throat. This tavern must have been facing west, because the burning sun came through the open door. No air-conditioning, but he was used to that in the places he drank in. It was a dive, all right.

He came back from the toilet, and Kinney was still interrogating the beach bum, the ex-marine. "What did you do? Tell me exactly what you did."

"Nothing. Fuck it."

Bill Houston sat down and said, "I got nothing against you boys. Got a little brother wants to go in the Marines."

The ex-marine was drunk. "That ain't nothing. I've seen some things."

"He's talking like he did something to some woman over there," Kinney said.

"Where?" Houston said.

"Vietnam, God damn it," Kinney said. "Aren't you listening?"

"I've seen some things," the bum said. "What it was, they held this woman down and this one guy cut her pussy out. That stuff happens there all the time."

"Jesus God. No shit?"

"I did some of it, too."

"You *did* it?"

"I was there."

Houston said, "You really"—he couldn't quite repeat it—"you really did that?"

Kinney said, "You cut up some bitch's cunt?"

"I was right there when it happened. Right nearby, right in the same—almost in the same village."

"It was your guys? Your outfit? Somebody in your platoon?"

"Not ours. It was some Korean guys, a Korean outfit. Those fuckers are senseless."

"Now shut the fuck up," Kinney said, "and tell us what the fuck *you* did."

"There's a lot of bad business that goes on," the man said.

"You're bullshit. The U.S. Marines would never put up with that. You're so bullshit."

The guy held up both hands like an arrestee. "Hey, wow, man—what's all the excitement about?"

"Just tell me you cut up a living woman, and I'll admit you're not bullshit."

The bartender shouted, "You! I told you before! You want beef? You want scrap?"—a big fat Hawaiian with no shirt on.

"This is a moke right here," the beach bum said as the bartender threw down his rag and came over.

"I told you to get out of here."

"That was yesterday."

"I told you to get out of here with that talk. That means I don't wanna see you yesterday, today, and tomorrow."

"Hey, I got a beer here."

"Take it with you. I don't care."

Kinney stood up. "Let's get the fuck out of this shit-hole moke joint." He put his hand up under his shirt at the level of his belt.

"You pull a gun in here you gonna do time, if I don't kill you."

"I get mad easy on a hot day."

"Get out, you three."

"You making me mad?"

The young bum laughed insanely and hopped backward toward the door, dangling his arms like a monkey.

Houston, too, hurried for the exit, saying, "Come on, come on, come on!" He was pretty sure he'd actually seen a gun butt in the waist of Kinney's jeans.

"See—that's a moke. Right there," the bum said once they got outside. "They act all rough and tough. You get an advantage on them, and right away they cry like little babies."

They each bought a jug of Mad Dog 20/20 from a grocer who demanded that they buy three loaves of Wonder bread along with the wine, but it was still a bargain. They ate a little of the bread and tossed the rest to a couple of dogs. Soon they walked, drunk, surrounded by a pack of hungry strays, toward a glaring white strip of beach and the black sea and blue froth crashing on the sand.

A man stopped his car, a white official-looking Ford Galaxie, and rolled down his window. He was an admiral in uniform. "Are you fellas enjoying the hell out of yourselves?"

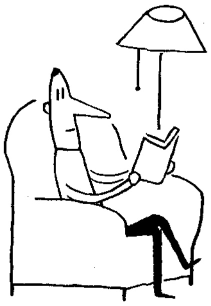
"Yes, sir!" Kinney said, saluting by putting his middle finger to his eyebrow.

"I hope like hell you are," the admiral said. "Because hard times are coming for assholes like you." He rolled up his window and drove away.

The rest of the afternoon they spent drinking on the beach. Kinney sat against the trunk of a palm tree. The bum lay flat on his back with his Mad Dog balanced on his chest.

Houston took off his shoes and socks to feel the sand mounding under his arches. He felt his heart expanding. At this moment he finally understood the phrase "tropical paradise."

He told his two comrades, "What I'm saying, I mean, about these mokes—I think they're related to the Indians that live down around my home. And not just them Indians but also Indians that are from India, and every other kind of person you can think of who's like that, who's got something Oriental going on, and that's why I think, really, there ain't that many different kinds of people on this earth. And that's why I'm against war." He waved his Mad Dog around. "And that's why I'm a pacifist." It was wonderful to stand on the beach before this audience and gesture with a half gallon of wine and talk.



Kinney, however, did disturbing things. With a dreamy look on his face, he tipped his bottle above his shiny black dress shoes and watched the wine dribble onto the toes. He tossed several pinches of sand in the bum's direction, speckling his chest, his face, his mouth. The bum brushed it away and pretended not to realize where it was coming from.

Kinney suggested taking the party to a friend's house. "I want you to meet this guy," he told the bum, "and then we're gonna fix your bullshit."

"Fine with me, asshole," the bum said.

Kinney held up his thumb and forefinger pressed together. "I'd like to get you in a space about that big," he said.

They headed across the beach to find the house of Kinney's friend. Houston was in agony, dealing with bare feet on the hot sand, and now on the black asphalt.

"Where are your shoes, you moron?"

Houston had his white socks in the pockets of his Levi's, but his shoes were gone.

He stopped to purchase a seventeen-cent pair of zoris at a store. They had a sale on Thunderbird, but Kinney said that his friend owed him money and promised to take them out on the town later on.

Houston had loved those ivory-white bucks. To keep them white, he'd powdered them with talc. And now? Abandoned to the tide.

"Is this a military base?" he asked. They were in some kind of development of cheap little pink and blue dwellings.

"These are bungalows," the bum said.

"Hey," Houston said to their companion. "What is your name, man?"

"I'll never tell," the bum said.

"He's totally full of bullshit," Kinney said.

Maybe these bungalows seemed a bit slummy, but not compared with what Houston had seen in Southeast Asia. A mist of white sand covered the asphalt walkways, and as the three of them strolled under the coconut palms he could hear the surf in the distance. He'd passed through Honolulu several times, and he liked it a lot. It simmered and stank as much as any other tropical place, but it was part of the United States, and things were in good repair.

Kinney checked the numbers above the doorways. "This is my buddy's house. Let's go around back."

Houston said, "Why don't we just ring the doorbell?"

"I don't want to ring the doorbell. Do you want to ring the doorbell?"

"Well, no, man. He ain't my friend." They followed Kinney around the building.

At one of the back windows, where a light shone, Kinney stood on tiptoe and peered inside, then he pressed himself against the trunk of a palm tree beside the wall and said to the beach bum, "Do me a favor—tap on the screen."

"Why should I?"

"I intend to surprise this guy."

"What for?"

"Just do it, will you? This guy owes me money, and I want to surprise him about it."

The bum scratched his fingernails along the window screen. The light went off within. A man's face hovered in the window frame, barely visible behind the screen. "What's the story, Mister?"

Kinney said, "Greg."

"Who's that?"

"It's me."

"Oh, hey, man—Kinney."

"Yeah, that's right, it's me. You got the two-sixty?"

"I didn't see you there, man."

"You got my two-sixty?"

"You just back on the island? Where you been?"

"I want my two-sixty."

"Shit, man. I have a phone. Why didn't you call?"

"I wrote you we'd be pulling in the first week in June. What do you think this is? It's the first week in June. And I want my money."

"Shit, man. I don't have all of it."

"How much you got, Greg?"

"Shit, man. I can probably get some of it."

Kinney said, "You are a lying piece of genuine shit."

From his waistband he pulled a blue-steel .45 automatic and aimed it at the man, and the man dropped like a puppet with its strings cut and disappeared. Right at that time Houston heard an explosion. He tried to understand where this noise had come from, to find some explanation for it other than that Kinney had just shot this man in the chest.

"Come on, come *on*," Kinney said.

There was a hole through the window screen.

"Houston!"

"What?"

"We're done. We're going."

"We are?"

Houston couldn't feel his own feet. He moved along as if on wheels. They passed houses, parked vehicles, buildings. Now traffic surrounded them. They'd come a long way in what seemed like three or four seconds. He was out of breath and sopped with sweat.

The crazy bum said, "That's pretty nifty, man. I think you won that conversation."

"I don't forgive my debtors. I don't forgive those who have trespassed against me."

"I gotta go."

"Yeah, I bet you gotta go, you stupid fuck."

"Where are we?" Houston said.

The bum was moving at a tangent now, off the sidewalk, into the street.

"Hey. I don't like your face," Kinney said as the guy left. "You crazy treacherous coward."

"What?" the guy said. "Listen, don't fuck with me."

"Don't fuck with you?"

"I think that's my bus," the guy said, and sprinted across the street through squealing traffic and got behind the cover of a bus.

Kinney shouted, "Hey! Marine! Yeah! Fuck you! Semper Fi!"

Houston doubled up and vomited all over a mailbox.

Kinney didn't look right. A greasy film covered his eyes. He said, "Let's get a drink. Have you ever had a depth charger? Shot of bourbon in a mug of beer?"

"Yeah."

"I could use a bellyful of them bastards."

"Yeah, yeah," Houston said.

They found a place with air-conditioning, and Kinney got the two of them set up with beers and shots in a booth in the darkness at the back and began preparing depth chargers.

"This'll put some torque in your pork. Ever had one of these?"

"Sure—you drop a shot in a beer."

"Ever had one?"

"Well, I just know how you make one," Houston said.

Without any sense of the intervening hours, Houston awakened sweaty and all bitten up by mosquitoes and sand fleas, a sagging mattress swallowing him alive, a headache pounding against his skull. He could hear the surf pounding, also. His first fully conscious thought was that he'd seen one man shoot another man, just like that.

He seemed to be quartered in some kind of open-air bedroom. He made his way to the faucet in the corner, where he drank deeply of the sweet water and peed, first removing from the sink a wet bedsheet with a large black-rimmed hole burned in its middle. He found his watch, wallet, pants, and shirt, but he'd lost his shoes on the beach, he now remembered, and he was pretty sure he'd left his kit bag at the Y. His seventeen-cent zoris seemed to have walked off on their own.

His wallet held a five and two ones. He collected ninety cents in coins scattered on the bamboo floor. He stepped out to get his bearings.

His head swam. The water he'd gorged on was making him drunk all over again.

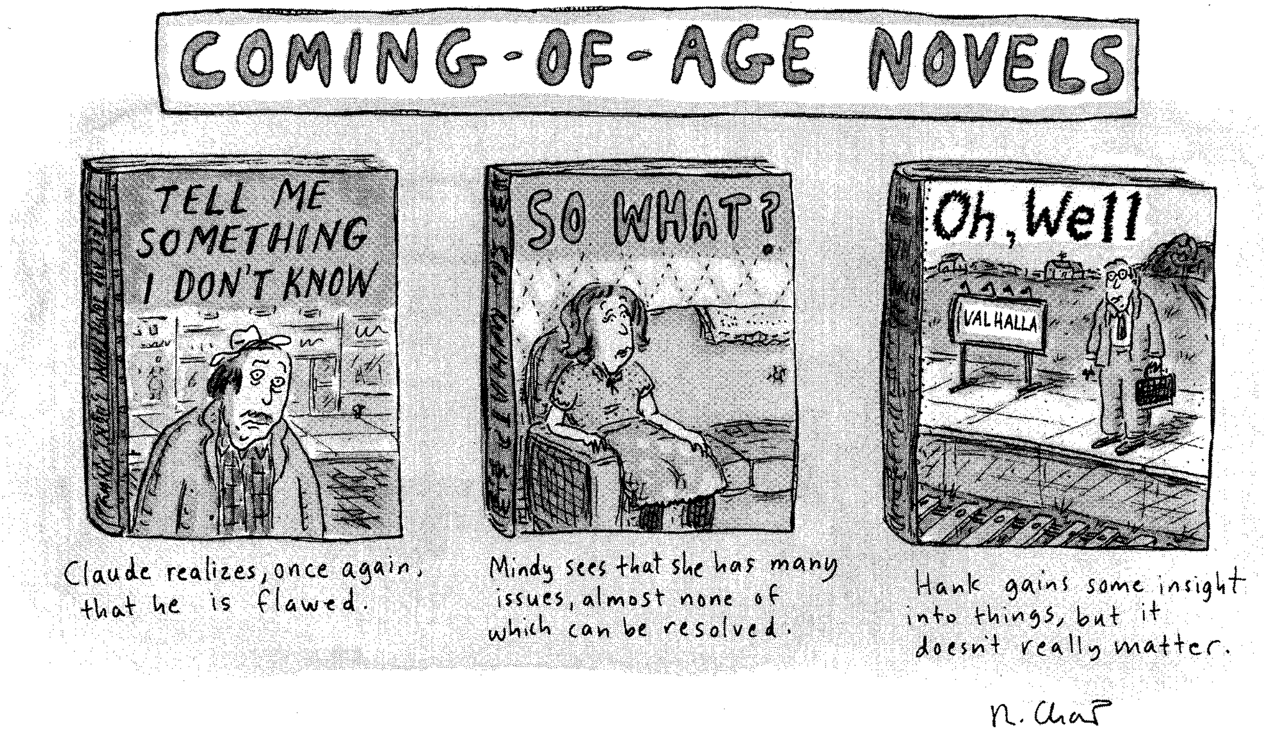
The sign said "King Kane Hotel," and it said "Sailors Welcome."

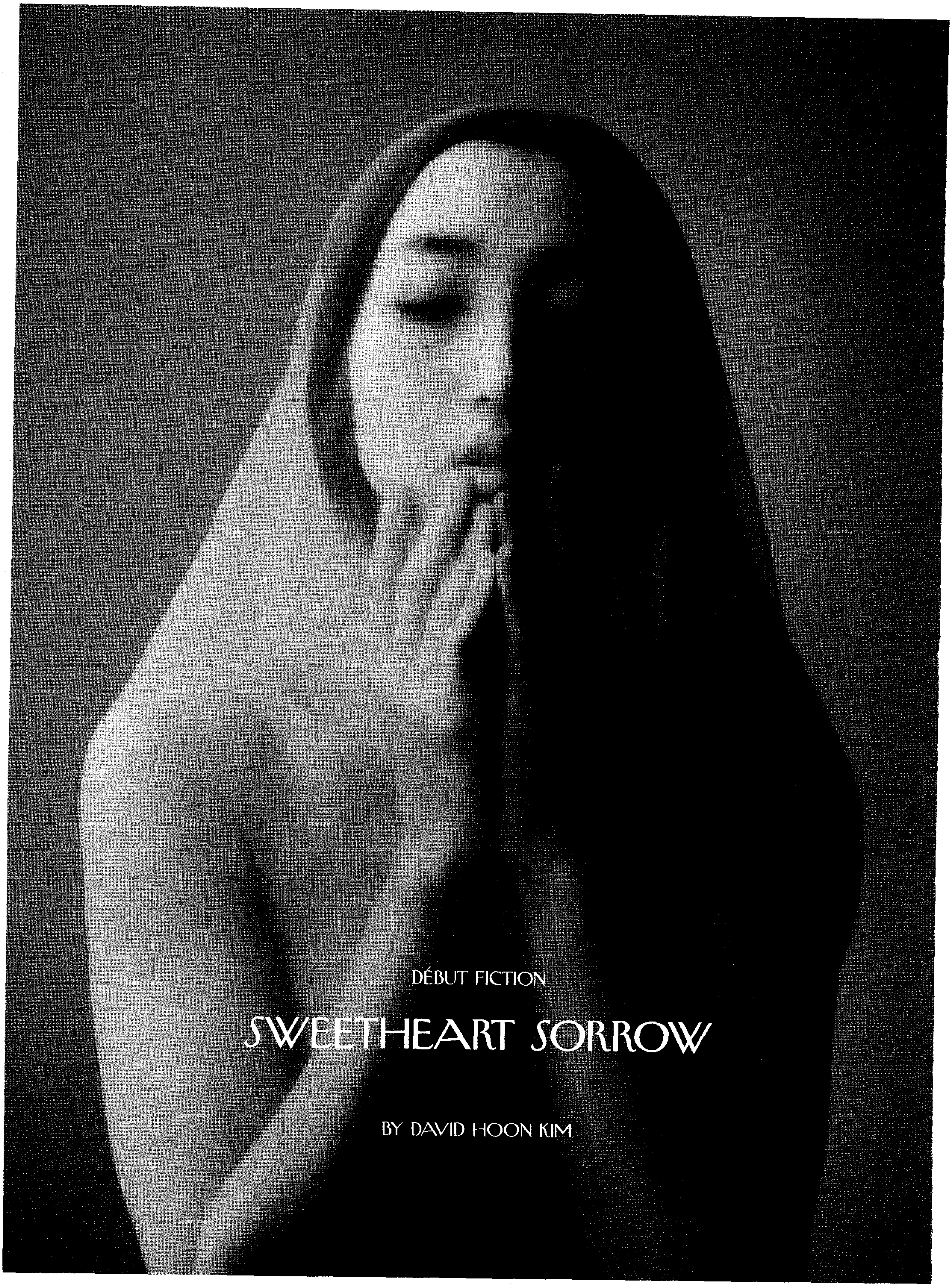
He kept an eye out for Kinney, but he didn't see anyone at all, not a living soul. It was like a desert island. Palms, the bright beach, the dark ocean. He headed away from the beach, toward town.

He didn't return to the Bonners Ferry. He had no intention of getting anywhere near her berth, or anywhere else that he might run into Kinney, the last person he wanted to see. He missed the sailing and spent two weeks ashore without liberty, sleeping on the beach and eating once per day at a Baptist mission on the waterfront, until he was confident that Kinney was closer to Hong Kong than to Honolulu. Then he turned himself in to the Shore Patrol for a week's recuperation in the brig.

His rate was rolled back to E-3 and he was a seaman again, which meant that he automatically lost his boilerman rating. This was the second demotion of his career. The first had resulted from "repeated minor infractions" during his tour at Subic Bay Naval Base, in the Philippines—after he'd taken to the warrens of vice outside its gates.

Houston spent the following eighteen months assigned to grunt work and garbage detail on the base in Yokosuka, Japan, mostly with rowdy black men, low-aptitude morons, and worthless bust-outs like him. More often than he liked, he remembered the admiral in Honolulu who'd lowered the window of his white Ford Galaxie and promised, "Hard times are coming." ♦


COMING-OF-AGE NOVELS
TELL ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW
SO WHAT?
Oh, Well
VALHALLA
Claude realizes, once again, that he is flawed.
Mindy sees that she has many issues, almost none of which can be resolved.
Hank gains some insight into things, but it doesn't really matter.
R. Chast



DÉBUT FICTION

SWEETHEART SORROW

BY DAVID HOON KIM

ETHAN LEVITAS, "PAST/PERFECT, #3" (1997); KYOKO HAMADA, "PINK BED" (2001)

Fumiko had locked herself in her room. No amount of pleading or bargaining seemed to sway her resolve not to come out. We hadn't argued. One minute she was sitting on my bed; the next minute she wasn't. She lived three doors away, coming and going as she pleased, and it took a whole day for me to notice that anything was amiss. On the third day, I went to see the superintendent; I got as far as his door when it occurred to me that I could be making a terrible mistake. I was an illegal resident of the Cité-U—a crumbling twelve-story dormitory named for a dead postwar French writer I had never read. My student identification card, along with my student visa, had expired a long time ago. The last thing I wanted was to get deported. Fumiko had locked herself up before, though she always emerged from her self-confinement after a night or two. There was an expression my father sometimes used, back in Denmark, *kæreste sorg*—sweetheart sorrow—to describe the sadness one feels at the thought of a love affair nearing its end. A sadness one is not yet ready to face. As I walked away without knocking, I could almost hear my father's voice in my head.

Back at Fumiko's door, I called out her name, as loudly as I dared, not wanting to attract the attention of the other residents.

Her voice, when it came to me from the other side, sounded impossibly far away: "I'm sorry."

"I know," I said, pressing my ear against the wood. "Just open the door, O.K.?"

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"I can't."

Another long silence. Then I heard her say, "*J'ai froid*"—"I'm cold." Or it could have been "*Ta voix*"—"Your voice." The fact that so many French words rhymed with each other, coupled with Fumiko's difficulties in pronouncing them, resulted in frequent misunderstandings between us.

"What did you say?"

"Your voice."

"My voice? What about my voice?"

But she had gone silent again.

I decided to take the air, visit the Latin Quarter. It wasn't yet evening, and the Métro was abnormally quiet: a lull between rush hours. After getting off at Saint-Michel, I lingered a few moments at the station entrance. Because of the heat from the subway tunnels, the nearby trees hadn't yet lost their leaves and the air smelled of mimosa and chestnut, even though winter was well under way. Eventually, I wandered into the Sorbonne. The guard at the entrance let me through, barely glancing at my expired identification card. Students loitered in groups in the main courtyard, bulky scarves wound elegantly around their necks. The marble-floored corridors were unheated. In the snack bar, empty white plastic cups stained with coffee littered the countertop. It was as if I had never been away. I walked past Philosophie, Histoire, Littérature Française, stopping at Littérature Générale et Comparée, my former department. The benches were empty, no one waiting to see their thesis director. I scanned the walls. Among ads for au-pair girls and cheap health insurance was a typewritten note pockmarked with unevenly aligned letters: "Urgent. Theoretical physicist seeks Anglophone to translate treatise. 200 pages. 10 euros / page." Since abandoning my dissertation, I'd earned what money I could by giving private English lessons to French high-school students, teaching unruly adolescents how to pronounce their "h"s and haggling with their stingy parents over my hourly rate. I knew nothing about physics. Yet the prospect of translating something—of not having to churn out anything in the way of original thought—appealed to me. I checked to see if anyone was watching, then tore off the piece of paper.

POSTHUMOUS FRAGMENTS

A View of the Kidron Valley from Abu Tor

Where my feet once walked
my eyes now go,
and later my memories,
and later the memories of me.
The spirit of God hovers over
what should have been water
and really is water.
The crocuses have flowered early.
They have blossomed in my corruption,
they have ripened in my desire.

First Love

I was blind to you when you loved me long ago.
I switched you for another, like Isaac,
for a smell, and a taste, and an appetite for meat,
for a fragrance of the field, and a house, and a little heat.
I have forgotten the words
of the only letter I wrote to you.
All that I remember is the taste of the glue of the stamp
on my tongue.
The fate that determined us was not really
destiny,
but it was as strong and sure as the finger of the violinist
that determines the fate of a note,
though it, too, is as final and as decisive
as death.

—*Yehuda Amichai*

(*Translated, from the Hebrew, by Leon Wieseltier.*)

On the way home, I pictured my employer-to-be introducing me to other colleagues—i.e., hypothetical physicists of theoretical physics, in need of a translator. One of the beggars making the rounds growled when I didn't drop anything into his grubby outstretched hand. Closing my eyes, I imagined myself earning two thousand euros a month, sitting in the back seat of a taxi, Fumiko next to me, as we cruised down the Avenue de la Grande Armée. The Grande Armée was the B side of the Champs-Élysées, radiating from the opposite edge of the Place de l'Étoile. It was grand and impressive, but not quite the Champs-Élysées. I was, if nothing else, a modest dreamer.

At a telephone booth, I dialled the number. I could see my residence hall from the booth, and I tried to find Fumiko's room among the tiny mirrored squares, her last words to me—*your voice, your voice, your voice*—echoing in my head. Near the top, I noticed a solitary blind eye, one of the windows failing to reflect back the sun's dying rays. An open window in the middle of winter? I was counting off squares when, on the ninth ring, a man finally answered, introducing himself as Raoul de Gadbois. "Clarisse has seen fit to move the telephone yet again," he went on, "thence my difficulty in answering it sooner." His French, ponderous and antiquated, was straight out of the Littré. Turning away from the building, I told him I was calling about the ad; I was convinced it had been there for months. We talked. He inquired if Blatand, my name, was English, and, resisting the urge to say yes, I admitted that I was from Copenhagen. "Where," I added, trying to give my French "r"s a British lilt, "everyone speaks the King's English." Gadbois suggested an hour and a date (one-thirty, tomorrow), then gave me an address: Quai Louis Blériot, in the sixteenth arrondissement.

"You need only to tell Clarisse that you are having lunch with me, Monsieur Blatand."

"Clarisse?"

"The maid."

After hanging up, I cast a sidelong glance at my profile in the glass booth. I could feel it. This was a turning point. The face in the glass nodded with me. If I hadn't yet got the job, I had already got a free meal. My luck was changing, and I was almost convinced I would find Fumiko waiting for me at my door. Stepping out of the elevator on the eleventh floor, I walked past the peeling wallpaper, the occasional graffiti. The hallway was empty. No Fumiko. I felt depressed at the thought of returning to my room, to my single bed, my drawerless desk, and my requisite antediluvian sink with two faucets: scalding hot and bone-numbing cold.

I stopped at Fumiko's door and knocked. Two quick raps.

"Fumiko, can you hear me? I know you're in there."

Gradually, I became aware of a muffled flapping noise. As though she were at her window, airing out the bedsheets.

"You can't keep this up forever," I said, more to myself than to her.

I had met Fumiko almost two years earlier, in the Métro. She was not the first to mistake me for one of her countrymen. To anyone seeing me walking around in Paris, I probably look about as Scandinavian as the Emperor Hirohito, even if the only thing I am able to say in Japanese is "I don't speak Japanese." I am unable to pronounce the name of the city where I was born.

"But you look so Japanese," an exasperated Fumiko told me that day, her French much more foreign-sounding than mine. Words, in her mouth, always seemed to have one syllable too many. We stood facing each other, surrounded by commuters, in the stale air of the subway car.

"Really." I let the sarcasm settle in. "I had no idea."

When I told her where I was from, she screamed. Several people looked at us.

"*De-eh-enmark*? Wouah!" A pause. "So you speak"—another pause—"*Danish*?" She even managed to give "Danish" an extra syllable.

"Yes."

Fumiko was from a small town in northern Japan; she was auditing courses at the École des Beaux-Arts. She smoked Marlboro Lights, which she pronounced Maruboru Right. She owned an Aiwa mini disk player, which, she told me, used a special lithium-ion battery. The friendlier she became, the more I found her friendliness irritating, presumptuous. I had met people like her before, Asians who thought I had something in common with them. In Denmark, I had grown so used to looking different from everyone around me that I was able to forget what I looked like. In France, I was made aware, all over again, of my appearance: from French students frowning over my un-French, un-Japanese name to panhandlers in the street who shouted "*Konnichiwa!*" when I walked past, no doubt the only Japanese word they knew.

I didn't think I would see Fumiko again, but I ran into her a few days later, at the student cafeteria. She insisted on sitting with me. On the way out, we discovered not only that we were both headed for the same residence hall but that we both lived on the eleventh floor—like something out of an Ionesco play. After that, we kept bumping into each other: at the cafeteria, in the hallway, by the elevator. (Only later did it occur to me to wonder if she had planned these "accidental" meetings.) I eventually learned that Fumiko had left for Europe after recovering from a nervous breakdown, the way wealthy Scandinavians went to the Mediterranean to convalesce from respiratory ailments. A drastic change in environment, a doctor had said, could only do her good. Her parents wired money to an account at the BNP every month. She had chosen Paris because she had studied French in secondary school.

I in turn told her about my dissertation—I hadn't yet abandoned it—on the influence of Sir James Frazer in the works of Samuel Beckett and Flann O'Brien. I was (as I used to tell my dissertation supervisor) interested in the manifestations of magic; I said this to Fumiko with none of the self-consciousness that I displayed in front of my professor. She asked me how long I'd been in France, and I gave her my usual line: "Long enough to feel like an exile, not long enough to feel French." I told her about being adopted as an infant, about growing up near Copenhagen, my childhood fishing trips with my father to the Faeroe Islands, my primary-school years spent in Sweden. Fumiko asked me why Scandinavians always sounded like they were mumbling, and I told her it was mostly the Danes. Even Swedes and Norwegians had trouble understanding us. There was a saying that Danes spoke with potatoes in their mouths—"*Danskerne taler med kartofler i munden*," I said. When she heard me speak the language, she couldn't stop laughing, yet I understood that she wasn't mocking me. Her reaction, I told myself, would have been the same had someone with blond hair and blue eyes spoken Danish to her. Who would have thought that the laughter of a Japanese girl would make me feel Danish again?

I don't know when I fell in love with Fumiko, with her boyishly cut black hair, her sputtering French, her habit of washing her underwear in the communal kitchen sink, even her way of entering a room, so quietly and unobtrusively that I often glanced up to find her reading one of my books or staring at a picture on the wall. An unforeseeable side effect of communicating in a language foreign to both of us was that it allowed me to forget, sometimes, that she was Japanese. A foreign language allows one to rename the world and everything in it. Perhaps I was able to do so with Fumiko as well—that is, I was able to see Fumiko herself with new eyes. Watching her inspect the carcass of an insect on my windowsill one afternoon, I found myself thinking, I have fallen in love with your strangeness. That same day, I told her she was beautiful: "*Vous êtes belle*"—the formal *vous*, in contrast with the *tu* we normally used with each other, underlining the solemnity of the occasion. Fumiko, from across the room, smiled, as though she suddenly understood something.

"What are you smiling about?" I asked.

"In Japanese, the *vous* is used by the wife to address her husband. The wife says '*vous*' and the husband says '*tu*.' I never thought about it until I came to France."

I went to where she was sitting, a book open in her hands. "Is that why you said '*vous*' to me for such a long time?" I asked.

She slapped me lightly on the arm with her book. "I said '*vous*' because we didn't know each other very well."

"And now?"

She didn't answer. That night, as we lay in bed together, I told her I loved her (in French, it was easier to say such things). The words, even buffered by a foreign language, nearly caught in my throat.

"*Moi aussi*," Fumiko answered, after a while. "*Je vous aime*."

I believe she was in love with me from the very beginning. Not long after we first met, I found on my doorstep two Fuji apples and an old Grundig transistor radio. All because I had mentioned, in passing, the persistent silence of my room. The accompanying note said, "A ghost in your room can make the silence disappear." I puzzled over the words for several minutes, until I realized that she had probably meant *en revenant* (coming back) instead of *un revenant* (a ghost). Later that evening, there was no answer when I knocked on her door, and, assuming she was out, I left a note of my own, signing it, "A fellow-ghost." We'd been going out for a few weeks when she told me she had been home when I came by but had been unable to leave her chair.

"Why?"

"Suddenly, I felt afraid. I couldn't move. I sat there, listening, for a long time." She gave a self-conscious laugh. "When I opened the door, you were already gone."

Had it been only three days? I was unlocking my door when I heard someone step out into the corridor. With a quickness in my chest, I looked up. It was Philippe, a psychology student who lived a few doors down. After hesitating, he waved. I had first met Philippe in the cafeteria. He had wanted me to take part in his research on pathological disorders affecting East Asian natives. "Some routine questions, nothing elaborate, so I can get an idea of your psychological makeup," he had told me that day, even after I had informed him of my background. Caught off guard, I suggested Fumiko, hoping she would refuse. But Fumiko was only too happy for an occasion to practice her French with a native speaker. A week later, Philippe came to my door.

"I don't know if I should be telling you this," he said.

"Telling me what?"

"It's about Fumiko."

"What about Fumiko?"

"Normally, I never reveal information given to me during an interview, but"—he glanced up and down the corridor—"I thought you might want to know."

"Know *what*?"

"In Japan, the majority of nervous breakdowns occur in the late teens to the mid-twenties. That's when you have your university entrance exams, your preëntrance exams to qualify for the entrance exams, your preparatory classes for the preëntrance exams . . ." Watching him talk, I recalled the morbid enthusiasm he had displayed in the cafeteria while telling me about *hwa-byung*, a stress syndrome that affected middle-aged Korean women, and the dreamy look in his eyes as he went on about a Japanese malady in which the sufferer grew obsessed with his own body odor. "There's even an exam to get into the preparatory classes, if you can believe that. It's no wonder so many people kill—"

"What's your point?" I said. I knew that Fumiko had found life in Japan exhausting.

He cleared his throat. "Your girlfriend came to France as a cure. But one of the conditions of her recovery was that she avoid things, *elements*, that might remind her of Japan. At least, for the time being." His voice trailed off.

"So? I don't see what the problem is." I stared down at the floor, where a corner of one of the tiles had been chipped away. Philippe didn't say anything. I looked up at him. "You mean *me*?"

"I've been trying to decide whether it was worth telling you."

"But I have nothing to do with Japan!"

Philippe lifted his hands, palms out. "I only told you because I thought you should know. You can take it or leave it."

But I couldn't. I could neither take it nor leave it. Although I looked Japanese on the outside, I didn't *feel* it, had never felt it. At the same time, the doubt always remained that I was not who I thought I was, that, unbeknownst to myself, I was an impostor, a fake. I feared I was no one, in the end.

Now I called out to Philippe, who had reached the other end of the corridor, "How's the research going?" When he turned around, I noted, not without a certain satisfaction, the dark circles under his eyes.

"Could be better."

"Oh? What's wrong?"

"My theories aren't holding up." Philippe walked slowly toward me. "A

SUMMER OF '42

As a kid, I rarely went to the movies. My one memory of a summer movie is of a movie about somebody else's summer, a nostalgic look back—way back!—to the "Summer of '42." I believe the movie is famous for a funny scene about buying condoms, but perhaps all summer movies feature some amusing scene with condoms. I wouldn't know.

I grew up one of seven children in a family where making plans took up about as much time as executing those plans, and even the most meticulously arranged and carefully orchestrated day failed to satisfy everyone. One person's idea of a good time always bored somebody else. The older kids were jaded about what the younger ones were just beginning to experience. A piano lesson would be scotched because a trip to the dentist couldn't wait. Over time, invisible strings slowly tethered one child to the next, and those two hooked up with a third, and so on and so on, so that movement by one led to a lot of jerking of the others, and freedom, if not impossible, was always a tangled mess.

That we all managed to eat together every night and squeeze into a church pew on Sundays was exhausting enough. My general sense was that summer movies, like summer itself, belonged to other people. When friends talked of movies they'd seen—or hiking or fishing trips they'd taken—it sounded to me like bragging. My vacations were vacant, an emptiness filled with feral joys, but still I felt vaguely gypped and carried some resentment at missing out on a part of the year that seemed to have been invented just for kids.

Once in a while, though, I'd be invited along with one of my friends. Most of my official summer fun happened in the presence of other people's kind parents, but even then I would worry, in a child's intuitive way, about the aspect of charity these outings involved. I could never quite lose the helpless and bewildering sense that I was merely being tolerated. I'm sure that this sensitivity is fairly common in children, simply because they are so attuned to the dynamics of power, being without it themselves.

My father always made sure that I had money. At the back door, he drilled me on manners, concerned about propriety and appearance in the wary way of men of his generation, men whose parents were immigrants and had a roughness that no amount of time in the New World would ever smooth over. It was like living with a protocol officer, and I learned my lessons, perhaps too well, delivering on these occasions an imitation of a boy, a twelve-year-old martinet. I was hoping to come off as earnest and polite, of course, but I can see now that the effect was probably comic, like watching a monkey bake a cake.

GABRIELLA GIANDELLI

The trip to see "Summer of '42" involved, to my horror, a casual dinner with my friend's parents beforehand. I had trouble chewing or swallowing in front of other people and was convinced that I'd choke or else blow milk through my nose. But my friend and his parents ate and talked in a light, relaxed way, with an inflection that was largely modulated by all the food in their mouths. The easy bantering flow of conversation baffled me. It moved too fast. Typically at our house, during dinner, you arranged a syntactically perfect yet cumbersome sentence in your mouth and then gently, slowly, set it in its proper place in the topic at hand. A trowelful of silence worked like mortar; you patted a scoop of it between every sentence to keep the course true. But with my friend's parents the conversation moved so fluently I could hardly get my thoughts into it, and when I did they seemed outdated and had this orotund speechy quality that made a stupid thud, exactly as if I'd heaved a brick on the table.

On the drive to the theatre—the old Neptune, in Seattle—I sulled up, silent in the back seat, watching out the window as the familiar streets reeled by. The marquee was a brilliant slab of white in the dusk. My friend's mother wore a batik skirt that flowed softly from her hips like light through a lampshade. She was lovely and sophisticated, and I was infatuated. Questions tumbled through my mind at a frightening pace. I had always used my manners to hide my real feelings, and I blurted out a desire to buy popcorn for everyone, but my friend's father told me to put my money away. I had been holding a wad of crushed dollars in my fist as proof. By the time the red velvet curtains swept aside and the lights went down, I was glad to be in the dark.

—*Charles D'Ambrosio*

recent study on cultural imprinting weakens what I've been proposing in my . . ." He stopped walking, then smiled thinly. "In other words, I'm in a bind."

A beat passed in silence.

"Can I ask you something?" I said.

"Sure."

"Is there a disorder where someone locks, um, himself in his room?"

"*Hikikomori*. Modern-day hermit syndrome." Philippe's face lit up. "Most live with their parents, who leave food by the door. In some rare cases, it can get ugly, but they usually live quietly in their rooms and only come out after dark." He winked. "That is, if they come out at all."

My body felt hot all over, the way it did at the onset of a fever.

Philippe was looking at me strangely. "Why do you ask?"

"Just testing your knowledge."

Raoul de Gadbois lived on the top floor of an apartment building overlooking the Seine. Despite the excessive heat of the radiators, I sensed something cold, a chill in the air. The furniture, the fixtures all seemed old but barely used. Everything was brightly lit. My head ached. After a mostly sleepless night—the result of chronic insomnia—I had woken up, throat full of phlegm, tongue covered with goose bumps; the fever had blossomed. Clarisse—a squat, middle-aged woman—led me past the study on the way to the dining room. I noticed an ornate glassed-in cabinet where Greek and Latin books intermingled with yellowing physics tomes. On the hallway wall hung a black-and-white photograph of a young woman with penetrating eyes and a mouth too large for her face.

Gadbois stood up from the table, and we shook hands. He looked to be at least seventy, a reasonably ugly man with a fleshy face and a perfectly bald head. His ugliness was subtle: it took you a moment to realize, and fully appreciate, its scope. He didn't seem the slightest bit surprised that I was not "European," as though it were a given, to him, that all Danes looked like me, and vice versa.

He said, gravely, "Bonjour, monsieur."

"Bonjour," I said. "Monsieur."

After we sat down, Gadbois asked about my life in France, the weather in Denmark—but the usual inquiries about my background did not come. I knew that a sneeze could strike at any moment, but I nevertheless forbade myself from asking for even a tissue, convinced that the smallest show of ill health would jeopardize my prospects. Feverish and delirious, I was about to tell him, just to have it done with, that I had been adopted, when Clarisse came in with a bottle of wine on a tray. It was only as I watched her fill Gadbois's glass that I understood, with a start, that the old man was blind.

"I don't need good beach reading, Ma. I need good prison reading."

The main dish was brought in. With slow, practiced movements, Gadbois's hands swept across the tabletop and closed over the fork and knife. Clarisse, as though waiting for something, stood in the background. At that moment, a strange and ridiculous thought entered my head: that Gadbois had intentionally kept his blindness from me on the phone, and in the laconic phrasing of his ad. He took a bite and said, "This isn't mackerel. Are you trying to trick me?"

I could tell, simply from looking, that the fish was mackerel; I had helped my father inventory the catch on our fishing trips.

"It's a mackerel, monsieur," Clarisse said, not the least bit surprised by Gadbois's reprimand.

He took another bite. "A herring. You went out and bought a herring."

"Herrings are more expensive, monsieur. You gave me only enough money for mackerel."

Gadbois turned away from his plate with calm disdain. "Is this mackerel, Monsieur Blatand?"

I noticed Clarisse, in the corner, fixing me with her imperturbable gaze.

"You're right," I finally said. "It's not mackerel."

Gadbois, dignified and triumphant, turned to Clarisse and nodded once, gravely, his honor restored.

In addition to the mackerel, other items on the menu—roast potatoes, buttered artichokes with shallots—were systematically contested by Gadbois. Clarisse responded to each accusation with equanimity and patience. At last Gadbois acquiesced, resigning himself to the impostor food. It was the best meal I'd had in months, and yet I couldn't taste a thing. Each time Clarisse came around to fill my glass, I kept my eyes on my plate, unable to look at her.

"You are not a student of physics," Gadbois said, staring off into space, as though it had just dawned on him.

I stared at his stained, grayish teeth. "Well, no."

"Have you translated physics texts before?"

"Not exactly."

"Have you studied physics at all, Monsieur Blatand?"

"Well—" A memory surfaced: dropping mold-encrusted coins onto the roof of the bicycle shed from my bedroom window in the Stockholm suburb of Rinkeby. "Some studies on gravitation, a long time ago."

Gadbois's gleaming forehead shifted. "What do you think of the theory of special relativity?" he asked, almost slyly.

I stared at him. Was this a trick question?

"The fact is," he went on, "scientists have suspected for years, even decades, that there might be a hole somewhere. No one has been able to prove it."

Gadbois stopped. I watched his flabby, brown-spotted hands smooth out the napkin, as though acting independently of their owner. I felt a painful, almost physical longing to see Fumiko, to hear her voice, feel the touch of her hand on my shoulder. Gadbois started talking about the inherent difficulties of describing something called a black body. I tried not to sneeze as I stared at the vacant seat next to Gadbois. A knife and fork had been set out alongside an empty plate, for a guest who had not come. Under the glare of electric lights, I saw that the porcelain was coated with a layer of dust; the silverware dulled by tarnish.

After the meal, Gadbois suggested we go to his study. I walked beside him, matching my steps with his, which were cautious but never unsure. Suddenly, he halted, in the middle of the hallway, and I was trying to decide whether to tell him that the study was still a few feet away, when he pointed at the photograph I had noticed earlier.

"My wife," he said, reaching out and brushing his fingers over the wooden frame, "in 1959."

That afternoon, I stood outside Fumiko's room with a plastic bag full of food. Day four, I told myself, ear pressed against the door. Five, if one counted the evening she had locked herself in.

"Fumiko?" I waited. "I brought you some food."

Some fruits, cheese, and a *boule de campagne*, her favorite bread, from the nearby Franprix. I knew the exact contents of Fumiko's cupboard, having glanced inside it the day before her self-confinement. Since then, each item had engraved itself in my memory, frozen in time: a bag of dried chickpeas, a canister of salt, a withered Fuji apple, and the rock-hard stump of a baguette. The human body, I knew, could go up to three weeks without food. And Fumiko had all the water she could drink from the faucet.

Back in my room, I wrapped all my blankets around me to keep warm—thinking wistfully of the dense, heavy comforters found in Danish country hotels—and sat down at my desk to start work on the twenty pages Gadbois had given me to translate. Instead of paragraphs on physics, it turned out to be a series of letters between Gadbois and the Académie des Sciences. "After consultation by an expert, we must regretfully refuse your articles for publication. It appears that your work rests on founding assumptions that no experiment has justified. Your theories, in addition, do not contain any experimentally verifiable element."

Over the next few days, in between checking to see if Fumiko had left her room, I allowed the twenty pages to become my obsession, the cynosure of my day-to-day life, as all-consuming as a new love affair. I even caught a grammatical error Gadbois had made, writing *une* instead of *un hémisphère*, which, unlike *une sphère*, was masculine. (It was the kind of error native speakers rarely made, although rarely didn't mean never, and I found such lapses strangely fascinating, like hearing a renowned pianist miss an easy note in the penultimate measure.) Sometimes, looking up from my work, I thought, At last I've found my calling. Once an indefatigable library rat, I no longer waited in line at the Beaubourg or the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, whose vast ribbed interior made me think of a whale's hollowed-out belly; I stayed in my narrow, cramped room and worked on Gadbois's text. "R. de Gadbois's definition of gravity, based on a modification of Planck's law of black-body radiation, ignores the effects caused by the disintegration of electrons near a rotating black hole." "I insist that you seek the opinion of another expert. If my articles do not appear in the Academy's reports, I shall include, in the English translation of my treatise, this potentially incriminating correspondence in its entirety." "The articles submitted for publication by R. de Gadbois show great ambition. His vast program is reminiscent of the articles published by Albert Einstein in 1905. Unfortunately . . ."

At night, hoping to lull myself to sleep, I tried to recall what little physics I'd gleaned from magazines and science-fiction novels. Gravity was not a physical force but was caused by a curvature in space-time. The density of an object determined its gravitational pull. Around a black hole, near the event horizon, the pull became so strong that time crawled along at a snail's pace, a minute lasting several millennia. I imagined everything inside Fumiko's room slowing down—the decomposition of atomic particles, radioactive emissions, transmigratory thought waves, universal corruption, entropy, and, of course, Fumiko herself—ground to a state of near-complete immobility. My eyelids began to grow heavier, the rest of my body, on the threshold of sleep, suddenly lighter. I began to retrace my path through Gadbois's apartment, from the entryway to the long, bright hallway that led past the study, past the kitchen, and into the dining room. My mind was trying to reveal itself to itself; I was coming back for something, but I didn't know what. Unexpectedly, I remembered that the maid, clearing away the table, had not touched the unused plate. I drifted off with the image of Raoul de Gadbois in his dining room—a dark, shadow-like form beside him. A human shape. Was it Fumiko, come out of her room at last? I couldn't be sure: a curtain made of darkness hovered, obstinately, in front of her head.

I telephoned Gadbois, who invited me to lunch again. Perhaps it was my imagination, but I thought I saw a look of amusement flit across Clarisse's face as she opened the door, before she turned away. I followed her down the hallway. Everything—the heat, the bright glare, the outdated, ageless furniture—was as I remembered it. Gadbois was waiting in the dining room. Solemnly, wearily, he held out his hand, which I shook. And then, taking his lead, I sat down, even as I realized, with a twinge of guilt, that it probably wouldn't have mattered if I had sat down first.

When lunch was brought out, Gadbois once again accused Clarisse of trying to trick him. Although the fish in front of him really was herring this time, he claimed that Clarisse had bought him carp (which he hated). I wondered, almost desperately, if his blindness could have affected his taste buds. I glanced at Clarisse and noticed a slight tremor, of annoyance or anger, run across her face. When Gadbois at last turned to me, I was still asking myself if this was a game he played with all his guests or a sign of something more serious, like dementia.

"What do you think, Monsieur Blatand?"

"I'm not sure."

"So you agree, then, that it's not herring."

"I can't really say."

"Well, Monsieur Blatand, it's either herring or it's not. Don't you agree?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Then you agree with me, Monsieur Blatand."

"Yes," I said.

I stared down at my plate (of herring) as Gadbois acknowledged another victory with a nod to his maid.

The meal went by without further incident. The fish (I no longer felt I deserved to call it by its rightful name), though undercooked, was vastly superior to the canned ravioli I heated on a hot plate every night. Gadbois's conversation was less reserved, almost voluble, and his gleaming forehead seemed to catch the light more frequently. Between sips of red wine, he tossed around hundreds of light-years and billions of degrees, and described chimerical landmarks—the Planck length, the Dirac sea, the Einstein-Rosen bridge—as though they were stops along one of the Métro lines.

Once we had retired to the study, Gadbois asked me to read through my translation. From time to time, he made me pause so that he might ponder, or pretend to ponder, this or that locution. (I assumed that his knowledge of English was, like the knowledge of dead languages, a mostly passive one.) While I read, the old man never stopped playing with a curious-looking object—a Plexiglas cube made of smaller, identical cubes and able to take on various proportions—and I remembered an episode from an old Greek myth, or the Elder Edda, where a band of nomads come upon a sumptuous cavern whose enchanted waters have granted men eternal life. The nomads realize, at the last possible moment, that the man offering them a chalice to drink is blind: the waters offer immortality—but at a price. Long ago, the first traveller who stumbled into the cavern deceived the next one, who in turn deceived another traveller, and so on. As Gadbois paid me, he announced that he had succeeded in reuniting the multifarious and disparate branches of physics into a cohesive whole, picking up where Poincaré had left off a century ago.

I tried to think of an appropriate response.

"Do you think, Monsieur Blatand, that the Académie is right?" His unseeing eyes seemed to hold my gaze. "Do you think I'm a crackpot? One of those fools who waste their last years trying to square the Euclidean circle or disprove Cantor's diagonal argument?"

"Well," I began, "that is . . ."

"One thing Einstein did not account for was temperature." He let this sink in. "Temperature, in turn, affects light. Light, and its proximity to matter. In other words, *gravitation*. All basic concepts, but S.R."—I realized he meant "special relativity"—"overlooks the effects of gravitation, as though it didn't matter."

I understood, listening to him talk, that he could have given me pure gibberish to translate and it wouldn't have mattered. I wouldn't have been able to tell the difference. Mostly for something to say in response, I asked him when he had started writing his treatise.

"Do you believe in miracles?" he asked me.

"I'm not sure."

He nodded, apparently satisfied with my answer. "It all depends," he said, "on how one defines a miracle, Monsieur Blatand. For example, it is a miracle that I managed to find a linguistically gifted Danish gentleman with a knowledge of gravitational physics such as yourself. Don't you think so?"

Before I could say anything, Gadbois went on, "When I lost my wife, I found I had too much time to think. When I lost my sight, I found I could think better. My head filled with ideas. Time passes differently. When I'm not working, I let my memories flow or call forth my favorite passages from Tacitus. Or I do nothing—I let myself live. I can remain sitting in an empty room, perfectly still, for three or four hours without discomfort." He paused. "Let us hope, between you and me, that the English will have better sense than my countrymen."

He gave me another twenty pages to translate. On my way out, I walked past Clarisse in the kitchen. She was pouring coffee into a small cup. I saw her—in one swift movement—spit into the coffee. She glanced up, her face perfectly blank. She raised a finger to her lips and gave me a half smile:

"You keep my secret and I'll keep yours."

On my doorstep I found the gray pullover I had given Fumiko for her birthday, which she used to wear only when she was in a good mood. (There was a photograph just above my desk of her wearing it during our trip to Saint-Malo.) Picking up the crumpled piece of clothing, I brought it to my face to inhale Fumiko's scent. It smelled of softener, but I breathed in anyway. Clothes washed by her always smelled better than clothes that I myself had washed, in the same machine, using the same detergent. A strand of black hair was stuck to one of the sleeves. I glanced over at her door. The Franprix bag was still there, untouched. Instead of unlocking my door, I backed away from it, as if to take a picture, until I bumped into the wall behind me. I let out a string of curses in Danish. The one thing I could never really do in French was swear, in the unthinking, spontaneous, stream-of-consciousness way of one's native tongue. I sank to a crouch. In that position, I saw Philippe's head emerge from his doorway, hair dishevelled, skin pale and subterranean—but the circles around his eyes were gone. His beatific, unfocussed expression abruptly changed when he noticed me sitting on the floor. He looked at my door and then looked back at me, holding Fumiko's pullover.

"Are you O.K.?"

I nodded, smiling.

"You look like you're crying."

"No, no, I'm fine." I wiped at my eyes. "It's the dust. Allergies."

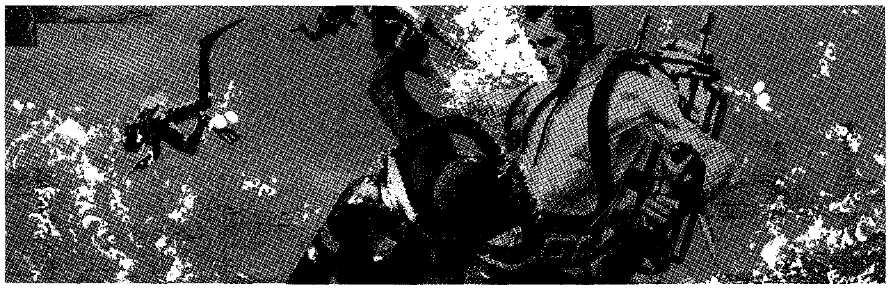
"You should see a specialist. Nine times out of ten, it's the sinuses."

There was no mockery in his voice. His smile was sincere, without nuance.

"Is there a disorder," I said, "that

SUMMER MOVIES

ATLANTA



JOHN RITTER

From the stains on the mattress it was clear that people had died on this bed, slowly, over the course of a lifetime. How great, I thought. How wonderful to be a part of such a long history. What would I do in this bed? In this room? What fluids would I secrete? I looked for clues. A kitchenette filled one wall. I opened the cabinets and drawers, which were empty, except for one that was jammed shut. Something was stuck in there. I had a good feeling as I pried the drawer open. This thing, whatever it was, was important. It would tell me what to do next. This might sound like a romantic reënvisioning of the moment, but no. I am superstitious now, and I was even more so at twenty-two, standing in my first apartment for the first time. The drawer opened with a bang. The thing was a record. It was the "Original Motion Picture Soundtrack" for the 007 movie "Thunderball." I looked at the picture on the album cover of two men wrestling underwater, and my heart throbbed, like a thunderball. I stood up quickly, and my head swelled with blood, like a thunderball. I knew what I had to do; it was massive and unavoidable, like a thunderball. I had a soundtrack; now all I needed was an original motion picture.

For this, my first movie, I drew inspiration from the summer itself. It was 1996, and the Olympics were being held in Atlanta. I lived in Portland, Oregon, but, like Atlanta, my city was hot. Especially my new, almost windowless studio apartment. I spent every day in a bathing suit and could not imagine wearing anything more. So the movie focussed on an interview with a twelve-year-old Olympic swimmer and her overbearing, negligee-wearing mom. I played both roles, pressing "Record" on a borrowed video camera and then running around in front of the lens and improvising responses to an unseen interviewer. I set some scenes at the Y.M.C.A. pool—shots of the young swimmer warming up before getting into the water. (I didn't actually know how to swim.) Principal photography took about three days.

I recorded my soundtrack by playing the "Thunderball" album while the camera was rolling. I chose track six from side two, "Mr. Kiss Kiss Bang Bang." I've never seen "Thunderball," so in my mind this wonderful music by John Barry can be paired only with my portrayal of a mother doing an inappropriately sultry dance for her pre-pubescent daughter.

I had heard that there was one video-editing machine in the basement of the Reed College library. I wasn't a Reed student—I'd dropped out of U.C. Santa Cruz the year before—but I had acquired an expired Reed student I.D. The student it had belonged to looked sort of like me, in the sense that she, too, was probably giving lesbianism a whirl and had cut off all her hair. In any case, no one ever used the machine, and I was rarely carded when I slid past the front desk.

How I wish I'd splurged on a brand-new VHS tape for the master cut. I had no interest in archival quality back then; I was too pleased with my crafty recycling of a tape I'd got from Goodwill. Thus, when my film ends, the video crashes back into the movie I taped over: "Superman." My audiences often complained when I tried to turn the VCR off at that point, so I found myself watching "Superman" again and again, minus the early stuff about Krypton. In time, my movie *was* Superman's origin story.

Late one night, I stumbled out of the Reed library with my finished movie in hand. I smiled condescendingly at the students in the foyer and walked past them into the night. Finally. Finally I wasn't just a rebellious bundle of hopes. I had some hard evidence to back me up. It was like a degree but quicker; like a job but more fun; like a boyfriend but forever. At ten minutes, the movie is about five minutes too long. I called it "Atlanta."

This summer I'm writing my second feature-length film. It seems a lot harder this time around, with all the pressure, real and imagined, and it's easy to feel that I have become less free with each successive work, that it has all been downhill since "Atlanta." But watching it again for the first time in years I realized that this movie, made with nothing and for no one, is all about pressure. Its star is competing in the Olympics; she's going for the gold, and she's *twelve*. She has done nothing her whole life but train for this moment. What she doesn't realize is that this moment will come again, and again, and again.

—*Miranda July*

affects someone close to someone with a disorder?"

"What?"

"A sort of 'caretaker's syndrome.'"

Philippe shook his head. "Listen, I know what you're doing."

I stared at him.

"If you're going to change the subject, you can at least be more subtle about it. I may be oblivious, but even I can take a hint once in a while."

Avoiding his smile, I stood up, still clutching the pullover. I heard Philippe say, "I'm sorry about scaring you with my psychologist talk. I got carried away. I was wrong about Fumiko. And about you. My new outlook has allowed me to make a lot of progress in my research."

I almost told him what was going on, right then and there, but something held me back: the same impulse that had halted my hand in front of the superintendent's door.

"By the way," he went on, "how is Fumiko? I haven't seen her around lately."

I focussed on a piece of graffiti scrawled on the opposite wall, "*Arrash les ponts*"—"Tear down the bridges"—as I answered, "She's been busy with her drawings."

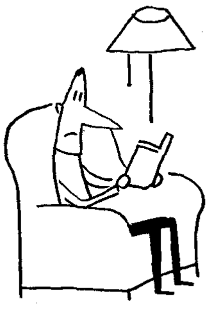
Philippe's gaze didn't waver. "You can be straight with me," he said.

For a moment, neither of us spoke, and then Philippe asked, "You guys didn't have a fight, did you?"

A fight. He thought there had been a *fight*. "No," I said, "we didn't have a fight."

"That's a relief," he said. "When you see her, can you ask if she wouldn't mind being interviewed again? I have a whole new set of questions." He seemed embarrassed. "She's never home when I knock on her door."

"Sure, no problem."



The latest pages were harder to translate than the first batch. Gadbois's notes and explanations concerning gravity were mostly incomprehensible to my profane mind. Though I did not especially like the sound of my own voice, I read passages aloud. I recited, as dispassionately as I could, "Let x be the path in space-time between q and t, q incarnating the three coördinates in space and t incarnating time." One by one, I pummelled through paragraphs on tachyons and neutrinos. I looked up "gravitation," in a moment of boredom, and found:

> The phenomenon of attraction between two bodies, proportional to the product of their masses and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them.

In the same entry was a well-known quotation by Einstein: "Gravitation cannot be held responsible for people falling in love." I threw my head back and laughed, and my gaze fell on a series of still-lifes pinned to the wall which Fumiko had done a few months ago, for one of her ungraded assignments at the École des Beaux-Arts—studies of spider and beetle carcasses, long dead and dusty, dried-out husks found on windowsills, inside fluorescent-light fixtures, and in hard-to-reach corners. The deceased insects, according to Fumiko, had been forgotten by the rest of the universe. Slamming the dictionary shut, I went back to work.

At last, the twenty pages were done. They had taken me almost two weeks.

Lying on my cold, narrow bed that night, I could see Fumiko's cupboard—the eye-of-Jupiter pattern of the woodgrain, the accumulation of dust in the corners. I could almost feel, in the darkness of my room, the relentless deterioration of its contents on an atomic level. I got up and opened my door. Lit only by the emergency lights, the hallway tiles reflected an eerie, phosphorescent glow. The Franprix bag in front of Fumiko's door looked like a tiny white apparition. I stepped out into the corridor. Underneath the usual unsavory smells of the dormitory was the effluvium of decomposing cheese. Still in my nightclothes, I carried the bag to the dumpster, not looking inside to verify whether Fumiko had taken any of the items. If I didn't look, the possibility remained. Back at her door, I sat down next to where the bag had been.

I told Fumiko, in a library whisper, about my new job, the lofty apartment, Clarisse. I described Monsieur de Gadbois, from the wrinkles around his bulldozer mouth to the creases on his moai-like forehead. Fumiko had always been fascinated by the physiognomies of old men. The first time she had visited my room, she had, after examining my meagre shelf of books, spent several minutes studying the mimeographed photo of Samuel Beckett sitting on the terrace of the Closerie des Lilas that I had taped to the wall. She loved the faces of W. H. Auden, Adolfo Bioy Casares, James (Frog-Eyes) Baldwin, even Sir James himself. "Old pears," she called them—for some reason—in her childish French.

"You know what?" I said. "I can't decide if Raoul de Gadbois is deluded or ahead of his time."

Although I always managed to find an English equivalent for each French word I translated, the whole thing seemed to crumble under its own weight when I attempted to reunite its constituent parts.

But, Fumiko's voice in my head protested, *you are the one translating it.*

"I'm not a theoretical physicist," I answered, as if that settled the matter.

I saw Gadbois again. He invited me to dinner this time, which I took to mean that our working relationship had changed somehow. The rooms were as brightly lit as ever, and everything had the same unnatural sheen in the evening as it did during the day. Though I knew I would never ask, I wondered why he insisted on having the lights on at all times if he couldn't see. Was he able to make out vague shapes, or at least perceive, on some level, the difference between night and day? My father had once told me that some blind men could sense nearby objects, especially if they posed a danger, through a sort of acoustic radar situated on the tip of the nose, on the cheeks, and on the forehead: capable, as it were, of seeing with the whole face instead of just the eyes. I didn't know whether my father had read this in one of his medical journals (which he perused the way some people peruse celebrity gossip) or if he had made the whole thing up, as he was wont to do, simply because it made sense to him—that men on whom such misfortune had fallen should be compensated with some kind of special, extra-human ability. Gadbois's blindness, I surmised from the number of books on the shelves, and the paintings and photographs on the walls, must have come to him late in life. I won-

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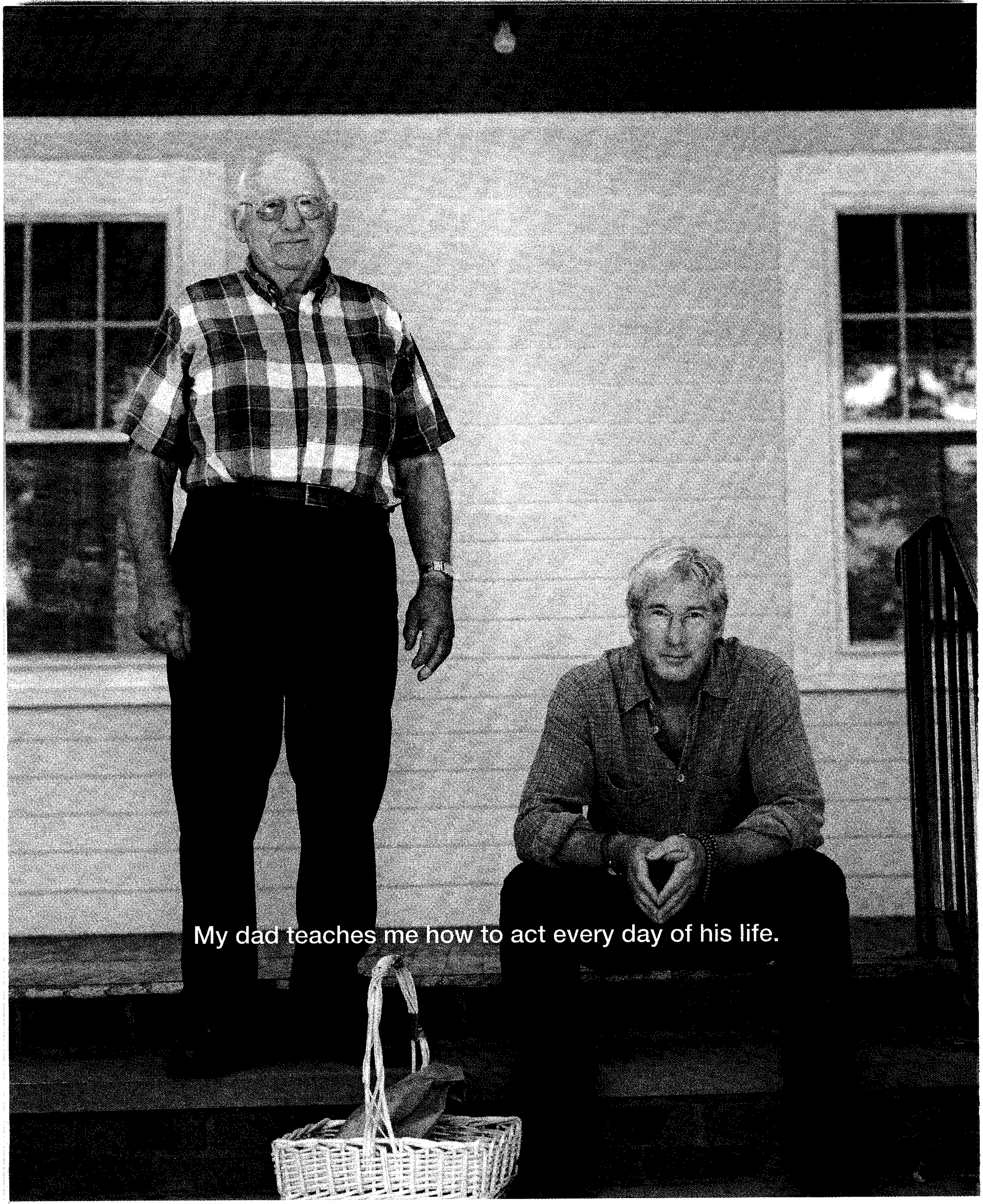
My dad teaches me how to act every day of his life.

For almost 20 years, my dad, Homer Gere, has been a Meals On Wheels volunteer. Along the way he's taught me that the simple act of bringing food to a homebound person gives a kind of nourishment a healthy meal alone can't touch. To be a Meals On Wheels volunteer or donate much-needed funds, visit www.mowaa.org.

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dered how it had happened, whether an accident or some disease had caused it, and what the old man's life must be like on a day-to-day basis. Had he dictated his treatise or, given the number of spelling mistakes and off-centered pages, typed the whole thing himself? The diurnal atmosphere of the apartment reminded me of summers in Denmark and Sweden, of days when the sun never seemed to set, the annual celebrations of Sankt Hans Aften and Midsommarafton, when magic was said to be at its strongest, of bonfires on beaches and everyone singing "Vi Elsker Vort Land." My parents' apartment was equipped with something called a "dark room," a fad dating back to the nineteenth century, which I used not only because of the white nights and my insomnia but also because I enjoyed the pitch-darkness—just me, my blood flow, and my nervous system—like being inside an anechoic chamber. Was this what Fumiko felt in her room? A mixture of invulnerability and indifference?

We had rabbit à la Provençale, with slices of aubergine. I savored the overcooked meat, the texture of the burned aubergines. We discussed Scandinavian literature. In Gadbois's voice I could almost see the expanses of exquisite, unblemished snow. He mentioned, with admiration, the names of Hans Christian Andersen and Kierkegaard; Niels Bohr; King Christian X, who had defied the Nazis and donned a yellow star. And he told me, as though to win me over, that it was a Danish architect—Johan Otto von Spreckelsen—who had designed the Grande Arche de la Défense. My ancestors, according to Gadbois, were an exemplary people, an example for the rest of Europe. I wanted to tell him that my Japanese girlfriend had locked herself in her room for the past three weeks, but I didn't. Dessert was a variety of cheeses—Brie, Camembert, Vacherin, chèvre—each involving a lengthy exchange between Gadbois and Clarisse on its authenticity. As Clarisse cleared the table, she passed over the unused plate, as she always did, without any change in expression.

Later, while reading my translated pages to Gadbois, I had a ludicrous thought: that he gave me more work only because I continued to have lunch—and now dinner—with him, as though that, and not the translations, were the true nature of my services. Had Gadbois wanted, from the start, someone who knew nothing about physics, someone who would be incapable not only of stealing his ideas but of seeing through their inherent fallacy? Perhaps the old man already knew that the British scientific community would react in much the same manner as the French. I envisioned my predecessors, candidates much more qualified than I, giving up on the first day, politely excusing themselves or storming out in disgust. Then again maybe I was the only one who had bothered to answer his ad. Leaving the apartment with twenty more pages, I walked past Clarisse, who was smoking a cigarette in the kitchen doorway. This time, her smile was slow and deliberate—a knowing, almost ironic smile, the kind of smile exchanged between conspirators. Or fellow-pretenders.

Instead of going straight home, I wandered around La Défense, the business district, and sat on the steps underneath the Grande Arche, which housed, among other things, the offices of the Ministry of Tourism. I went up the steps to the splendidly illuminated parvis. The wind was strong that evening and made the enormous canvas roof, suspended by cables, whip and buckle rhythmically. At that hour, I was the only one walking around the premises. Fifty feet away, an employee in uniform, perhaps a security guard, sat inside a glass booth shaped like a giant pill capsule. Peering up at the glittering rows of windows dotting the monument walls, I was suddenly overwhelmed by the sheer size of everything. I told myself that I had every reason to take pride in Spreckelsen's work. H. C. Andersen and Christian X *were* my people. And yet why did I feel as though I had deceived Gadbois?

Stopping only to eat or go to the toilet, I did nothing but translate. A draft was entering my room from somewhere, and even after I had sealed the windows with insulating tape the feeling of cold persisted. I tried listening to the radio that Fumiko had given me, but the crackling static was ruining my concentration. Finally, I took it out to the dumpster. I found the newest batch of pages—fewer equations, more text—even harder than

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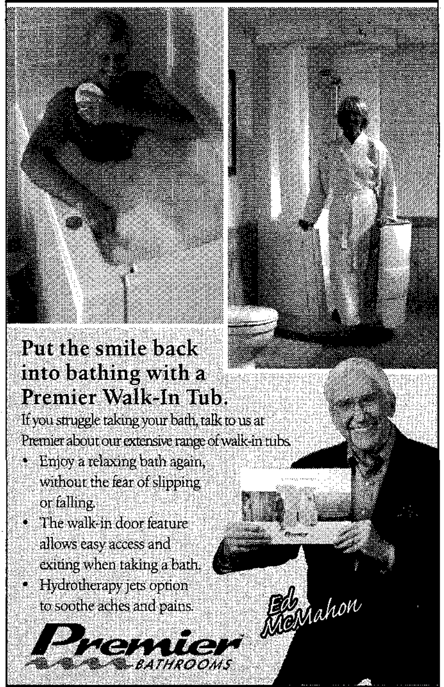

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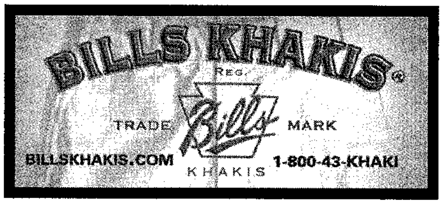

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the last. My dictionary was now a tattered, sorry mess, its spine broken, its coffee-stained leaves creased and torn. Late one night, unable to sleep, I started thinking about the cupboard again. Had Fumiko eaten anything? The stump of baguette? The chickpeas? Knowing her fondness for apples, she had probably eaten the Fuji, I concluded. Perhaps she had managed to soften the bread with hot water from the faucet.

Something about what Gadbois had said tugged at me. "S.R. doesn't take into account the effects of gravitation." Getting up, I turned the lights back on and skimmed the pages I had already translated. On a whim, I took down from the bookshelf my abridged edition of Frazer's "Golden Bough," flipping through the chapters until I found a passage that I had read long ago. It said that magic, in its most primordial form, might be defined as the effect of two independent objects acting upon one another over a distance, such as voodoo, psychokinesis, or telepathy. It was a coincidence, a fortuitous convergence of notions, but as I compared Frazer's definition of magic with the dictionary's definition of gravity, I felt I had discovered Gadbois's secret. In refuting Einstein's theory of special relativity, Raoul de Gadbois wanted to prove the existence of magic.

I reached for the remaining stack of sheets, which I'd planned to finish over the next few days. The first glimmer of dawn was squinting over the horizon when, halfway through the last page, in the midst of an interminable paragraph on electromagnetic interferences, I came upon the word "possum." My pen dropped, with a clatter, from my cramped fingers. The word struck me as out of place in a physics treatise. I was tempted to replace it with "positron"—the chapter was about positrons—but reminding myself of my duty as a translator, I started to translate:

> Imagine a possum at point A and at time t, so that, at time t', we suspect it to be at point A'.

"Have you come to a conclusion about Monsieur de Gadbois?" a familiar voice asked, interrupting the tomblike silence of my room.

I found Fumiko lying on the bed; she was sketching the back of my head and was almost finished.

"If you ask me, I don't think he's all there." She considered what she had just said. "If I knew I was becoming insane, I would just eclipse myself."

I watched her fiddle with the radio I had thrown away. When I blinked, her hands, like a prestidigitator's, were empty.

"You know," she said, slowly, "this last time, I nearly did it. I nearly eclipsed myself. Do you know what stopped me?"

"What?" I whispered.

"Your voice. It didn't sound the same. There was a hopeful note in your voice when you came to my door. That's what kept me from eclipsing myself. Your voice."

"Well," I said, going back to my translation, "I'm glad you didn't."

A moment later, I turned to say something else, but Fumiko was already gone.

On my way out to meet with Gadbois, I stopped at Philippe's door. What if he had been right all along? What if ancestry, in the end, was the only thing that really mattered? There was no answer when I knocked. I tore off part of a page from my translation and wrote on it, "Fumiko hasn't left her room in a month," before adding, "You were right about her and about me." I thrust the note under the door before I could change my mind.

During the meal, Gadbois hardly spoke, as though our previous meals had worn him out utterly. Only the sound of utensils scraping against the porcelain punctuated the silence, and it occurred to me, suddenly, that *this* was what the old man's life was like most of the time. A muted, monotonous darkness—like the invisible motion of dark matter around a black hole. Clarisse, hardly disturbing the silence, entered the room bearing a tray. She served Gadbois his coffee first, before coming around to my side. Gadbois had almost touched the steaming cup to his lips when I found myself saying—my voice abnormally loud—"Don't drink the coffee, Monsieur de Gadbois."

Both Gadbois and Clarisse looked at me.

"I don't think," I went on, "that what you have there is coffee."

Gadbois raised an eyebrow. "Oh?"

"It's obviously not coffee."

Gadbois said, uncertainly, "I beg your pardon, Monsieur Blatand?"

"I believe Clarisse is trying to deceive you. I suggest you find someone to replace her, Monsieur de Gadbois. Someone who doesn't have a habit of spitting into the coffee of blind men."

For a brief second, the old man seemed at a loss. Then he cleared his throat, nodded, and, addressing the cup of coffee more than Clarisse, said, "You are free for the rest of the day." He nodded once more. "That will be all."

Without a word, Clarisse gathered up the cups of coffee. As she picked up my cup, I heard her murmur, quietly but distinctly, "I've been spitting in yours, too."

A few moments later, I followed Gadbois to his study. I saw him, out of the corner of my eye, come to a halt, as he always did, in the middle of the hallway. His hand reached out, hesitantly, and I thought of warning him, or even shoving his frail body forward. I watched, instead, as his fingers brushed against nothing, or, rather, the empty blank wall, the portrait of his wife just a little to his right. To Gadbois, it might as well have been light-years away.

"Clarisse!" he shouted. When she appeared, still holding a dishcloth, he pointed to the wall and said, with icy formality, "Please be so kind as to put the portrait of my wife back in its original position."

I watched as Clarisse, her hand betraying a small tremor, carefully adjusted the picture frame so that it was once again within range of Gadbois's outstretched arm.

As though nothing had happened, we continued on our way, leaving Clarisse in the hallway. I almost turned to see if she was smiling at us, but I kept walking. After all, there must have been days when Gadbois miscounted, or started counting his steps too soon, or too late—missing his wife by mere millimetres. It wasn't impossible. In the study, after groping about, he handed me a thick bundle of papers: the remainder of his treatise, whose title page read "On the Persistence of Sorrow in Gravitational Interactions." To my surprise, I said to him, "I'm sorry about your wife."

It was as though he hadn't heard, and for a few torturous heartbeats I wasn't sure if I had spoken the words out loud.

"My wife?" Softly, ever so softly, Raoul de Gadbois said, "My wife passed away fifteen years ago, Monsieur Blatand."

Perhaps it was nothing more than an effect of the light, but his face looked heartbreakingly flaccid, white like the underside of a crab.

Approaching the dormitory, I heard a burst of sirens. At the front entrance, silent lights pulsated rhythmically against the brick wall. The parked ambulance was marked "I.M.L. VILLE DE PARIS." I closed my eyes, and the pulsations continued against my eyelids. As I stood there, Gadbois's treatise tucked under my arm, I became aware of a flapping noise above me. I opened my eyes. I finally understood what Fumiko had been trying to tell me in her garbled, mispronounced French: not *Ta voix* but *Au revoir*. Gazing up at the rows of windows, I saw the white of bedsheets and Fumiko's silhouette. The illusion held for another second, and then it was gone. Billowing curtains framed the outlines of two men dressed in white. From where I stood, I couldn't tell if they were watching me.

The elevator doors opened at the eleventh floor, and, before I had time to get out, the two men in white entered with a gurney. I could make out a vague shape underneath the plastic covering held in place with belts. At the far end of the corridor, I saw Philippe, his face in a state of shock. I don't know why, but, just before the doors slid shut, I smiled at him. The men barely seemed to register my presence, as I moved back into a corner to make room for them. In order to fit the gurney into the cramped compartment, they were obliged to tilt it vertically—hence the belts, I thought to myself—so that the upright litter stood next to me, like a fourth person, as the elevator began its slow descent.

"How long do you think she was in there?" one of the men asked, staring straight ahead.

"No idea," the other one replied, not looking at his partner. "At least a few weeks?"

"But the body hardly smells."

"No kidding. Window was open the whole time. See the food in the cupboard?"

As we passed the seventh floor, Gadbois's treatise slipped from my fingers and fell with a barely audible thud. I made no move to pick it up. Sixth floor. The one who had spoken first, as if he couldn't bear the silence, spoke again: "I was just thinking . . ."

"Yeah?"

"Do you think it was windy that day?"

His partner: "What?"

"There was an unfinished cigarette in the ashtray."

"So?"

"Marlboro Lights. Just like me."

His partner took this in. "No kidding."

"This is how I see it. A half-burned cigarette means she put it out before she died or that it went out by itself, which means . . ."

"Here we go again."

"But why put out her cigarette before dying? Then again why leave it unfinished? That's why I think it was windy that day."

In the days following Fumiko's death, Philippe would show me his notes, strewn with one-of-a-kind expressions, Fumikoisms copied down in a minuscule but legible lycée script. She had told him—an impersonal interviewer, a stranger doing research—what she was incapable of telling me, a Scandinavian who looked too much like one of her own countrymen. "When I am near him, it tugs at me, like a sweet, diabetic longing. A sticky addiction welling up like a blood bubble. And then I want to eclipse myself." Perhaps she didn't want to admit what was happening for the same reason I was unable to admit it to myself. Love makes us do strange things and behave in unimaginable ways. As the elevator light moved from sixth to fifth, I slid my hand underneath the plastic shroud. The men, still talking, didn't notice a thing. I took Fumiko's cold and unyielding hand, firmly, in my own. Fifth moved to fourth. All the way to the ground floor, I held it like that. ♦

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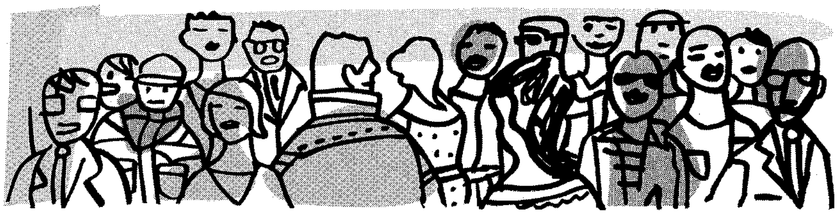


BOOKS

THE LADY VANISHES

Two biographies search for the real Hillary Clinton.

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

In August, 1995, Carolyn Huber, an aide to Bill and Hillary Clinton, was doing a little tidying up around the White House when, in the so-called book room, she noticed a sheaf of computer printouts lying on a table. Without looking at them too closely, Huber picked up the papers and shoved them, along with a stray coat hanger, into a box, which she then pushed underneath a table in her office. The printouts—and the coat hanger—sat there, undisturbed, for five months, until Huber finally got around to cleaning her office and discovered what a mess she had got into.

The printouts were old billing records from the Rose Law Firm. They detailed work that Hillary Clinton had performed in the nineteen-eighties for Madison Guaranty, a failing Arkansas savings and loan, and they had been subpoenaed back in 1994 as part of the Whitewater investigation. The records had been searched for but, investigators were told, were nowhere to be found. Huber realized that she needed to report the discovery of the documents right away. When she delivered the papers to the Clintons' lawyers, her hands were shaking.

As Carl Bernstein tells us in his new biography of Hillary, "A Woman in Charge" (Knopf; $27.95), the appearance of the billing records presented a challenge even to the First Lady's staunchest allies. The White House book room was off-limits to almost everyone except Huber, the Clintons, house guests, and Mrs. Clinton's grooming staff, and it was hard to imagine the First Lady's makeup assistant taking much interest in them. (When investigators examined the records later, they found Mrs. Clinton's fingerprints, literally, on them.) Hillary offered no explanation for what had happened—"I do not know how the billing records came to be found where they were found," she told reporters—but was nonetheless angry that so few in her party rallied to her defense. She questioned her aides, one of whom tried to explain the awkwardness of the situation. "You know, we don't have answers for people," the aide said to her, according to Bernstein. "We can't tell them where these things were. We can't tell them why it took two years to find them." Clinton still didn't see the problem. "Yeah, but people should know that if I wanted to destroy these things I would have destroyed them," she said. "And they never would have been found."

There are two kinds of books about Clinton. The first tries to prove that she's really much worse than you think she is, the second that she's really no worse than you think she is. Bernstein has apparently mellowed since his Watergate days, and his book belongs squarely in the latter camp. Even as he chronicles one fabulous misstep after another, he describes the former First Lady as "well-intentioned" and "principled," motivated by deep religious faith and a passionate sense of caring. He characterizes the "so-called Whitewater matter" as "overblown almost from the moment the *New York Times* first wrote about it," and relates Clinton's various self-justifying comments—"If I wanted to destroy these things, I would have"—with no apparent irony.

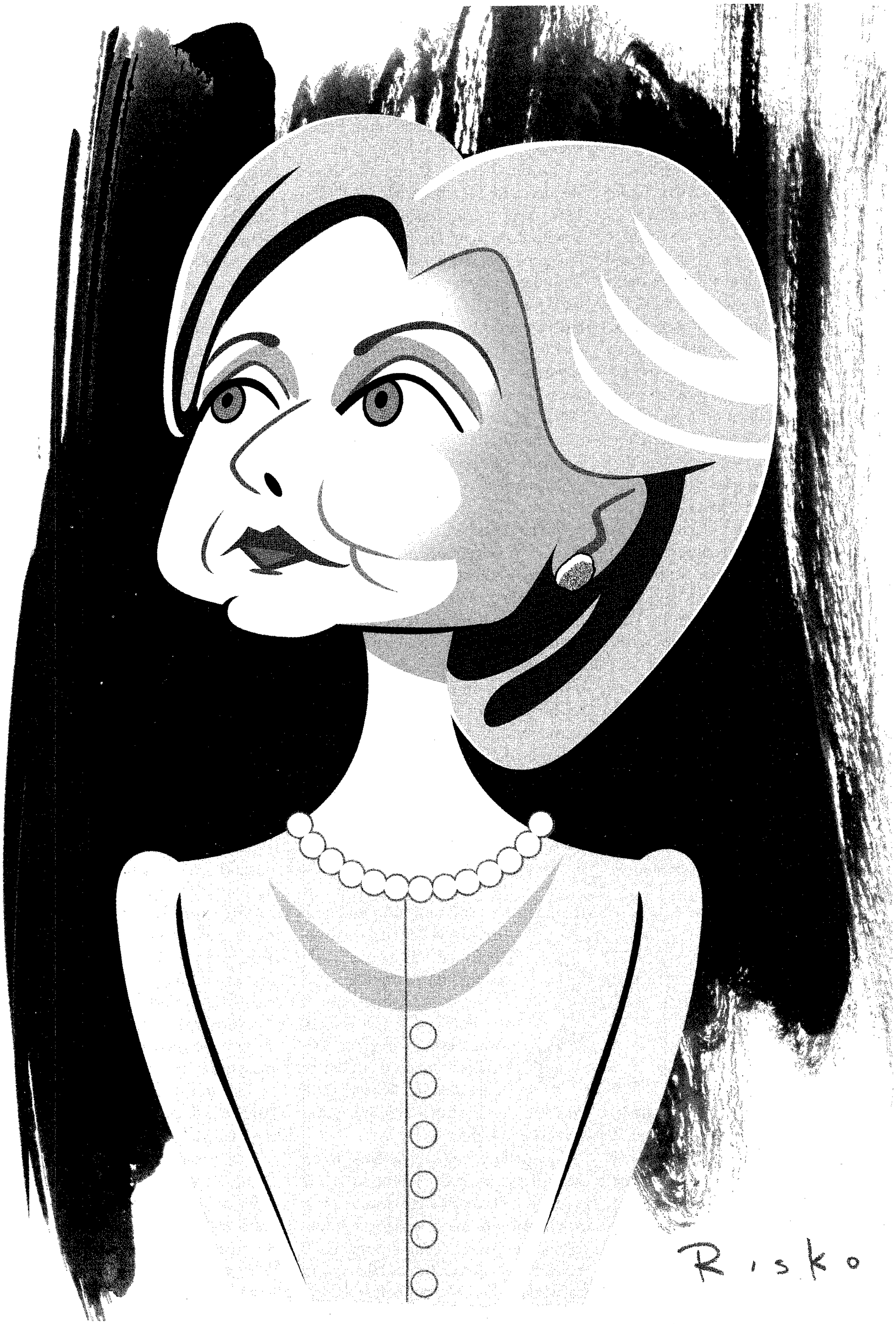
Jeff Gerth and Don Van Natta, Jr.,'s "Her Way: The Hopes and Ambitions of Hillary Rodham Clinton" (Little, Brown; $29.99) is the other kind of Clinton book. Van Natta is a *Times* reporter and Gerth a former *Times* reporter. Indeed, it was Gerth who broke the "so-called Whitewater matter," back in 1992, and then, more than any other journalist, kept the story alive. The tantalizing promise of "Her Way," which is appearing simultaneously with "A Woman in Charge," is that there is still a book's worth of dirt about Hillary out there. But, thanks in part to Gerth's earlier diligence, this is a promise that's tough to make good on. Take the hitherto untold story of Lee Telega, a Cornell University extension employee who worked in Clinton's Washington office for six months, guiding the new senator on agricultural policy. Gerth and Van Natta go to great lengths to prove that Clinton's office never filed the required paperwork for Telega. The result? Apparently, Senator Clinton is guilty of receiving unauthorized dairy-farming advice.

"A Woman in Charge" and "Her Way" join what is, by now, a veritable library of Clinton biographies, including Donnie Radcliffe's "Hillary Rodham Clinton: A First Lady for Our Time," Gail Sheehy's "Hillary's Choice," David Brock's "The Seduction of Hillary Rodham," and Edward Klein's "The Truth About Hillary." The pace of publication has quickened recently, so that the book lists this spring and summer include at least five new Clinton volumes—six if you count the paperback that accompanies "The Hillary Clinton Voodoo Kit: Stick It to Her, Before She Sticks It to You!"

Just about every biography—and this includes the two latest entries—begins with a description of Clinton's formative years: her middle-class childhood in Park Ridge, Illinois; her stint as a Goldwater Girl in high school; her arrival, in thick glasses and bell-bottoms, at Wellesley College. Most then rush through her years at Yale Law School, a romantic interlude whose unromantic climax is sev-

ROBERT RISKO

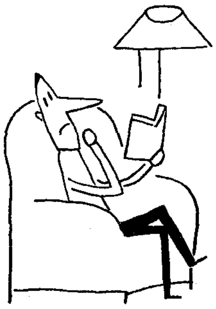
Hillary Clinton has been endlessly investigated and exposed, and yet her campaign's premise is that nobody really knows her.



Risko

enteen years in Arkansas. There follows a discussion of the 1992 campaign, Hillary's critical role in saving Bill from Gennifer Flowers, and the requisite reflection on the complex nature of their marriage. Sympathetic and unsympathetic biographers alike tend to tell Clinton's more recent history as a sequence of spectacular humiliations—first Gennifer, then health care, then Monica—followed by even more spectacular recoveries: an office in the West Wing, a seat in the United States Senate, a shot at the Presidency. Along the way, they offer some never before disclosed documents or factoids. As the end approaches, they try to come up with an account of what matters to Hillary and what doesn't—an explanation of who she truly is. Then, in the very last pages, they acknowledge that the effort probably hasn't quite succeeded and that the reader is still feeling at sea. As the historian Gil Troy observes in his 2006 biography, "Hillary Rodham Clinton: Polarizing First Lady," the "literature regarding Hillary Rodham Clinton is vast but unsatisfying." Or, as Gerth and Van Natta put it at the close of their book, "So, who is the real Hillary?" So many pages, so little progress.

The repeated failure to get at the "real" Hillary can itself be variously interpreted. It can be taken as a reason to abandon the project or, alternatively, to rethink the question. On the face of it, one would be hard pressed to maintain that the public doesn't yet know enough of the relevant facts. By now, even those who have been only half paying attention possess more information—much of it intimate—about Hillary Clinton than they do about their neighbors, their co-workers, and, quite possibly, their parents. If many Americans, including many of Clinton's biographers, still feel that they don't know the real Hillary, then surely that must say something about who Hillary really is.



Consider the apparently simple but, it turns out, unanswerable question of her name. When she married Bill, at the age of twenty-seven, Clinton pointedly decided to remain Hillary Rodham. According to Bernstein, she had resolved to do this "as a young girl, even before the practice was encouraged by a nascent women's movement." He quotes Clinton telling a friend that the choice was a matter of principle: it affirmed that she would continue to be "a person in my own right." Seven years later, when Bill was in a tough campaign to regain the Arkansas governorship, Hillary changed her mind. Except, she insisted, it wasn't a change at all.

"I don't have to change my name," she declared. "I've been Mrs. Bill Clinton. I kept the professional name Hillary Rodham in my law practice, but now I'm going to be taking a leave of absence from the law firm to campaign full-time for Bill and I'll be Mrs. Bill Clinton." Hillary remained Mrs. Bill Clinton all the way up to the eve of her husband's Inauguration as President, at which point she suddenly began introducing herself as Hillary Rodham Clinton. This change, too, she insisted, wasn't one. "Hillary Rodham Clinton has been the First Lady's name all along, since 1982," her press secretary, Lisa Caputo, told the *Times*, in what was described as a tone of exasperation. "We're at a loss as to why people think this is something that we're just trying to change now." A few weeks ago, the Albany *Times-Union* reported that Clinton has now dropped "Rodham" from her Presidential-campaign literature, though it still appears on communications from her Senate office. Even the one apparent constant in this history—Hillary—turns out to be dodgy. During a 1995 trip to Nepal, Clinton said to reporters that she had been told that she was named after Sir Edmund Hillary, the first climber to reach the top of Mt. Everest. This is why, she explained, her name has two "l"s. But, since Clinton was born in 1947 and Edmund Hillary, a New Zealander, was unknown outside his own country until his summit, in 1953, the account, as many noted, was implausible. (Questioned about the tale during the 2006 Senate campaign, a Clinton aide called it a "sweet family story her mother shared to inspire greatness in her daughter.")

In a political culture like ours, where character supposedly is all, this sort of fuzziness is obviously a problem. And yet even here it's possible to look for an advantage. Clinton's Presidential campaign is explicitly premised on the idea that no one really knows her. The day before the formal announcement of her candidacy, on January 20th, Clinton told NPR's Steve Inskeep, "I may be the most famous person you know very little about." Two days after the announcement, she told NBC's Brian Williams, "I'm probably the most famous person you don't really know." The day after that, she told the "Today" show's Meredith Vieira, "I may be the most famous person you really don't know." Speaking to potential supporters in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, the following weekend, she said, "I may be the most famous woman you don't really know."

In the fifteen years since Hillary became First Lady, she has made news for almost everything she's done. (Her hair styles alone have probably generated more headlines than most congressmen.) Two episodes, however, stand out, because they were so consequential and, in different ways, so disastrous. "A Woman in Charge" is especially good on what's generally referred to as the health-care debacle; "Her Way" offers genuinely new insights into Clinton's vote on Iraq.

Bernstein makes several things clear about the health-care debacle, one of which is that it didn't have to happen. As he reports the story, the first critical misstep was Bill's. Many of the new President's advisers, including Lloyd Bentsen, the Treasury Secretary, and Donna Shalala, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, opposed the choice of Hillary to lead what was formally known as the President's Task Force on National Health Care Reform. They doubted her qualifications and advised the President to keep his distance. Shalala tells Bernstein that she warned the President, "You can't run a major policy like this out of the White House. You've got to have some insulation from it, in case it falls on its face." But he wouldn't—or couldn't—listen. As an anonymous deputy explains to Bernstein, it was a matter of politics in the most domestic sense. Hillary had "stood by him in the Gennifer Flowers mess. And he had to pay her back. This is what she wanted."

The next mistakes were Hillary's, and Bernstein documents them in rich detail. Clinton and the task force's staff coördinator, Ira Magaziner, assembled five hundred members for the group, then decided to organize them—if that's the right word—into thirty-four committees. Not surprisingly, work quickly fell behind

"Can you put more nudity in this?"

schedule. The committees were required to meet under near-military conditions of secrecy: members were forbidden to photocopy documents under discussion or even bring pens and pencils to some sessions. Their meetings were closed to the press and, indeed, to all outsiders, an arrangement that was soon challenged—successfully—in court.

Clinton's biggest blunder, as Bernstein tells it, was to offend the very legislators whose support she needed most. At a retreat for Democratic senators in the spring of 1993, Clinton was asked whether it was realistic to pursue such an ambitious health-care program, given her husband's many other legislative initiatives. She responded that the Administration was prepared to "demonize" those who opposed the task force's recommendations.

"That was it for me in terms of Hillary Clinton," Senator Bill Bradley, of New Jersey, told Bernstein. "You don't tell members of the Senate you are going to demonize them. It was obviously so basic to who she is. The arrogance. The assumption that people with questions are enemies. The disdain. The hypocrisy."

When the task force finally finished its proposal, months after it had promised to do so, the bill was one thousand three hundred and twenty-four pages long and so complex that, Bernstein writes, "even Hillary's closest allies on the Hill could not fathom its contents." In the meantime, Clinton all but assured a poor reception for the bill by allowing it to be leaked to the Washington *Post* before formally briefing lawmakers. Still, there was hope for some kind of health-care reform. As the task force's plan was dying, key senators and congressmen of both parties proposed simpler alternatives. Had Clinton thrown her support behind any one of these, millions of Americans who lack health insurance might now be covered. But she refused.

"I find her to be among the most self-righteous people I've ever known in my life," Bob Boorstin, the task force's deputy for media relations, told Bernstein. "And it's her great flaw, it's what killed health care."

The Senate voted on the Iraq war resolution on October 11, 2002. On October 10th, Clinton delivered a speech on the Senate floor explaining her position. She called her vote "very difficult"—"This is probably the hardest decision I have ever had to make," she said—but she would "cast it with conviction," she added.

"The facts that have brought us to this fateful vote are not in doubt," she said. "Intelligence reports show that Saddam Hussein has worked to rebuild his chemical and biological weapons stock, his missile-delivery capability, and his nuclear program. He has also given aid, comfort, and sanctuary to terrorists, including Al Qaeda members." All these so-called facts, of course, turned out to be very much in doubt.

A great deal has been written about the intelligence gathered before the war and about the extent to which it was manipulated. It now seems clear that the White House presented to the public information that it knew, or at least should have known, to be false. But senators had access to information that the public never saw. Ten days before the vote authorizing the war, the Bush Administration delivered to Congress a classified, ninety-page report entitled "National Intelligence Estimate: Iraq's Continuing Programs for Weapons of Mass Destruction." The document, most of which to this day has not been released, detailed what was known and, just as important, what was not known about Saddam's capabilities. On the basis of the report and other information, Senator Bob Graham, of Florida, then the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, decided that evidence of W.M.D.s in Iraq was weak. He repeatedly urged his colleagues to read the full report and not to rely on the unclassified—and highly selective—summary that the Administration had made public. (Graham was one of the twenty-three senators who ultimately voted against the war.)

Did Clinton take the trouble to read the intelligence estimate before casting her vote? All the evidence that Gerth and Van Natta review indicates that she didn't. Clinton would have had to go to a secure room in the Capitol to get access to the document. Meanwhile, as Gerth and Van Natta point out, her aides could not have seen the intelligence estimate, because they lacked the necessary security clearances. Her spokesperson recently told the Washington *Post* that Clinton was briefed on the report "multiple times" by several members of the Administration.

No one, except perhaps Clinton, can know whether reading the intelligence estimate would have influenced her decision to authorize the war. Gerth and Van Natta argue, plausibly, that her vote was

"The women in the audience, sometimes they want to just rip him to shreds.... What people miss sometimes is the vulnerability and complexity of these characters."

—Edwidge Danticat
on Junot Díaz

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all but predetermined by her need to appear "tough" and by her husband's 1998 bombing campaign against suspected W.M.D. sites in Iraq. They also argue, plausibly, that her failure to consult the report undermines recent statements she has made. At a candidates' forum in February, Clinton declared, "My vote was a sincere vote based on the facts and assurances that I had at that time." Also in February, she said, "If I had known then what we know now, there would never have been a vote and I never would have voted to give the President the authority." At a campaign stop in New Hampshire the same month, she pointedly refused to label her vote a mistake, saying, "The mistakes were made by this President, who misled this country and this Congress." But can you really be misled by a report you've never read?

Neither Bernstein nor Gerth and Van Natta talked to Clinton directly for their books. (Bernstein reports that when he started work on his book, in 1999, both Hillary and Bill indicated that they would be happy to speak to him; later, they changed their minds, on the ground that they didn't want to favor one book over all the others.) As a result, "A Woman in Charge" and "Her Way" are forced to fall back on Clinton's largely ghostwritten, highly sanitized account of her life, "Living History," published in 2003. Then again, Hillary being Hillary, it's not clear how much the authors would have gained by spending time with her.

I covered Mrs. Clinton sporadically from the day she began her first campaign for the Senate, on Daniel Patrick Moynihan's farm, through her early years in office. In that period, I saw her in dozens of settings—working the state fairgrounds in Syracuse, nodding attentively during her "listening tour," chatting with aides in Washington, signing books in Westchester County, taking a call from her husband on her cell phone. I also interviewed her a few times. When the subject was policy, she was always smart and engaged; when the topic was personal, it was like talking to someone through several layers of Plexiglas. Of course, I was trying to get at the "real" Hillary. (In the interest of full disclosure, I never even came close.)

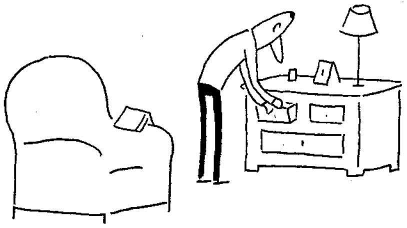
History is full of politicians who have sacrificed other people to their ambitions. A willingness to do so might even be called a precondition of power. Clinton is unusual in that she seems, above all, to have sacrificed herself. Whether you follow her around for months or just read a book about her, you can't help admiring her extraordinary discipline. When her husband was accused of creating a "slush fund" to manage his extramarital affairs, she organized a legal team to protect him—that's the kind of person she is. (Bernstein reports that, in 1990, the team interviewed five women, in one case with Hillary in the room, to obtain statements from them that they had never had sex with Bill.) In January, 2000, I accompanied Clinton on a campaign swing through western New York. The first morning began with what was expected to be a friendly radio interview. Instead, the host asked Clinton whether she had ever slept with Vince Foster. No matter what else she did or said that day, it was clear that this story was going to dominate the news cycle. Her press secretary looked as if he wanted to vomit. But Clinton managed to smile and shake hands through the next ten hours of campaign events, as if the whole incident had never happened.

As soon as Clinton indicated that she was going to run for President, it was inevitable that books like Bernstein's and Gerth and Van Natta's would appear. It was also inevitable that, whether or not anything truly new was revealed, other journalists would use these volumes as an excuse to trot out their own favorite Clinton stories—the billing records, the name changes, the absurd extravaganza on the Moynihan farm, and, oh, have I mentioned "I've always been a Yankees fan"? The Clinton camp's official response to the books has been dismissive. "Is it possible to quote someone yawning?" the Senator's press secretary, Philippe Reines, said to the Washington *Post*. Perhaps Clinton is, at this point, hardened enough to be bored by the efforts of Bernstein et al. Or perhaps she is pained by them. It would be interesting to know what she really feels, and it is possible to argue that such information is relevant to the electorate. How a chief executive regards his (or her) mistakes is, after all, a matter of importance. (See President George W. Bush.) But, as "A Woman in Charge" and "Her Way" make clear, this is precisely the sort of question about Hillary that cannot be answered. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

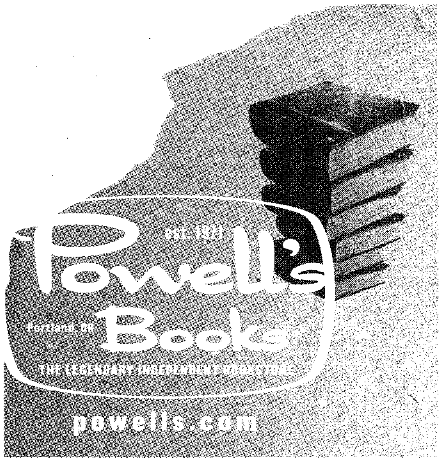
Five Skies, *by Ron Carlson (Viking; $23.95).* A notable exponent of that difficult literary technique the happy ending, Carlson, who has been writing short stories for decades, brings a gentle sense of decency to his third novel, a tale of the mountain West. High in the desert plains of southern Idaho, three men gather for a summer of hard work: an aging rancher, whose wife was killed in a freak accident; a nineteen-year-old fleeing both family and law; and an engineer whose career is built on precision but whose brother died in a poorly planned stunt. Time and talk, so often friends to Carlson's characters, slowly heal the wounds, but the men's commission, a ramp for a Knievel-style canyon jump, makes hazardous any hope for moral uplift and serves, in the end, as the stage for tragedy. But Carlson may be a short-story writer at heart; like his picaresque early novels, this one lacks the assured line of a natural novelist.

Zoology, *by Ben Dolnick (Vintage; $12.95).* Dolnick sets his début novel in the Central Park Children's Zoo, where he briefly worked, and where his protagonist, Henry, finds employment, after flunking out of college. The zoo, a rich seam of metaphor, serves as the backdrop to Henry's coming-of-age drama. Staying in the Manhattan apartment of his brother's rich girlfriend, he becomes infatuated with a beautiful tease, while negotiating tensions with his ill-matched, empty-nester parents. The characters—goatish, sheepish, and bovine by turns—stand as both keepers and kept, a problem illustrated when Henry frees his favorite goat for a walk through Central Park and it runs away. As a writer, Dolnick seems to share some of his protagonist's immaturity, but he demonstrates an engaging lightness of touch.



Religious Freedom and the Constitution, *by Christopher L. Eisgruber and Lawrence G. Sager (Harvard; $28.95).* The authors argue that the "wall of separation" between church and state is a clumsy metaphor that, in the past sixty years, has repeatedly led courts into "jurisprudential quicksand." In its place, they offer a principle that they call equal liberty, which diverts attention from "imponderable questions about the goodness of religion" and focusses it on individual cases. Free religious expression thus becomes largely a function of other freedoms—like those of speech and association. The authors proceed patiently and sensibly through considerations of crèche displays, conscientious objectors, ritual animal slaughter, and peyote smoking. Their recommendations may prove more useful as a philosophical corrective than as a set of juridical guidelines, but their careful attention to the social meaning of symbols, and their nuanced concern with the sociological role and ideological sway of religion in American culture, insures the persuasive force and continuing relevance of their arguments.

The Verneys, *by Adrian Tinniswood (Riverhead; $35).* The letters of the Verney family survive as the largest and most continuous collection of personal correspondence from seventeenth-century Britain, and Tinniswood draws on them to produce a lively, almost novelistic account of an aristocratic family "with a long lineage and a habit of backing the wrong side." Their stories range from the outrageous—Sir Francis Verney, who "turned Turk" and became a pirate along the Barbary Coast; "Mad" Mary Verney, whose husband's philandering drove her to zelotypia, or morbid jealousy—to the more familiar and heartrending: a father and son separated by political allegiances during civil war; a patriarch who worries about his children's financial security. Tinniswood's portraits are intimate, compelling, and deftly situated within the broader historical period, so that the turbulence of the seventeenth century is rendered as a human drama.



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BOOKS

FIRE DOWN BELOW

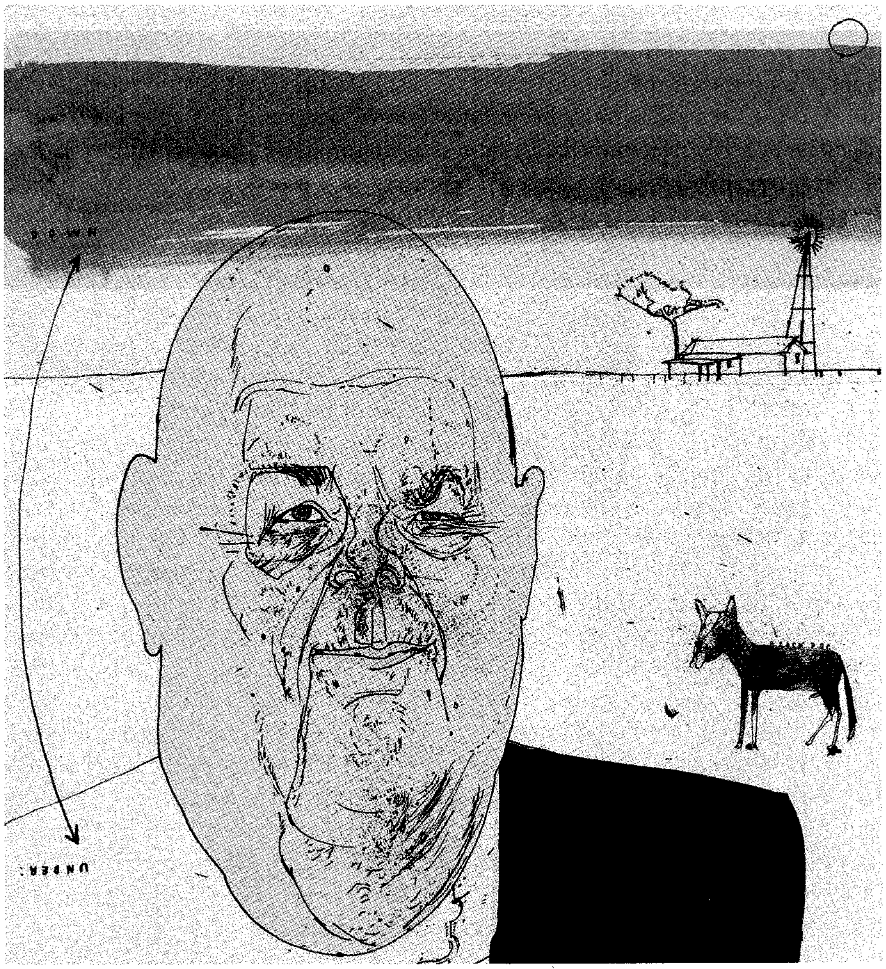
The poetry of Les Murray.

BY DAN CHIASSON

Poetry goes to the backwater to refresh itself as often as it goes to the mainstream, a fact that partly explains the appeal of Les Murray, the celebrated "bush bard" of Bunyah, New South Wales, Australia. The son of a poor farmer, Murray, who was not schooled formally until he was nine, is now routinely mentioned among the three or four leading English-language poets. Because in Murray's poetry you learn, for example, that there exists such a thing as the "creamy shitwood tree," he has been mistaken for a neutral cartographer of far-flung places. But the key to Murray, what makes him so exasperating to read one minute and thrilling the next, is not landscape but rage. "How naturally random recording edges into contempt," Murray writes, identifying the poles of his own combustible poetic temperament.

Murray's poems, never exactly intimate and often patrolled by details and place-names nearly indecipherable to an outsider, reflect a life lived self-consciously and rather flamboyantly off the beaten track. Murray has always been associated with the land in and around Bunyah, where Aborigines harvested wild yams before Murray's own people, "bounty migrants" from Scotland, displaced them in 1848. His childhood was marked by "lank poverty, dank poverty," a condition enforced by his grandfather, who kept Murray's parents in a brutal, resentful tenancy—sharecroppers, in essence, on their own ancestral lands. Murray's biographer, Peter Alexander, describes a slab house with a shingle roof and a floor of stamped earth covered by linoleum, sunlight streaking "through the generous gaps in the walls." Perhaps no major English poet since John Clare grew up in such destitution, and, like Clare, Murray enjoys the "hard names" associated with being poor: "rag and toejam, feed and paw."

We associate the depiction of rural life with pastoral, a mode that was shaped by city sensibilities for city audiences. Pastoral is a sophisticated game pitting poets against earlier poets, like a chess match played across time. No poet writing about the natural world entirely opts out of the game, but Murray's poetry of elk and emus, bougainvillea and turmeric dust, comes close. For the sheer scarcity of its flora and fauna, this pastoral feels pretty far off the Virgilian grid. No poet who was "kept poor," as Murray believes he and his parents were, sees "nature"—droughts and floods, the relentless summer heat on an uninsulated iron roof—in celebratory terms. Indeed, since the poverty that Murray suffered was an enforced poverty, it is hard even to see "nature" in natural terms. Nature, for him, is the field where human motives, often sinister, play out.



After an indigent childhood in rural Australia, Murray learned to turn anger into art.

DAVID HUGHES

If you've been as poor as Murray was, "fate" can come to be synonymous with "what people do to you." The great struggle in his work is therefore between what Whitman calls the "Me myself" and what Murray calls the "Them and He." Murray's poems tell an old story—the indignity that a small person and those he loved suffered at the hands of big, corrupt people, a long time ago—but they tell it with a ferocity that sharpens the farther away from the source the poet travels. You need to be a little bit of a lunatic to bear the specific, outsized grudges Murray has borne through his sixties, when all kinds of attention—including Alexander's fine biography (published in 2000), hundreds of articles and favorable reviews, and an invitation to write a new preamble to the Australian constitution—have come his way. And, indeed, there is always something demented about Murray's poems: even at their most painstakingly rational, it is as though, to quote Dickinson, "a plank in Reason, broke."

Rant-poems crop up everywhere in Murray: graffiti by other means, these blunt, scrawled mottoes are abandoned, like graffiti, the minute they get made. Murray has the habit of comparing people and things he dislikes to Nazis—including, most famously, in a poem called "Rock Music," sex:

Sex is a Nazi. The students all knew
this at your school. To it, everyone's
    subhuman
for parts of their lives. Some are all
    their lives.
You'll be one of those if these
    things worry you.

This poem is "misunderstood," Alexander claims, but then he quotes Murray's less than reassuring clarification: bullied by girls in high school, he came to view himself as the target of "a kind of attempted psychic castration of people who are out of fashion in some way." (The girls from Taree High School, Taree, N.S.W., might be forgiven for whatever ambivalence they now feel about being compared to castrating Nazis by their nation's preëminent poet.)

One way a child has of fortifying himself against the torments, real and imagined, of the outside world is to become an inveterate reader. Murray was aware of words at an early age, taking special delight, when he was three, in the phrase, from the Lord's Prayer, "trespass against us." (He is a faithful Catholic, dedicating his books "to the glory of God.") He read Hopkins and Eliot early on and, the biography tells us, devoured the poetry of John Milton in a single weekend. Those three authors govern Murray's entire career. You hear Hopkins in the homemade compounds and heavy consonants ("Nests of golden porridge shattered in the silky-oak trees,/cobs and crusts of it, their glory box"); you sense Milton behind Murray's larger-scale works, notably his 1998 verse novel, "Fredy Neptune"; but most of all you detect the presence of Eliot, whose self-monitoring Christianity suggests an inner untidiness too vast to be tamed by ordinary secular means. Murray, who met his wife in a Passion play (they were both students at the University of Sydney; he played Satan, and she was in charge of his wardrobe), seems permanently shaped by a small archive of adolescent mortifications and slights. Flinch-prone and skittish, Murray (again, like Eliot) finds his defense in caricature, generalizing about people from a few details or remarks. His temperament allows for only a beat or two between data and conclusion (synonymous too often for Murray with "condemnation").

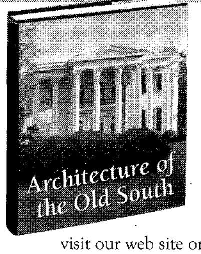
This bluntness can be off-putting; Murray often lacks a middle register of feeling. When he writes a poem about AIDS, for example, he seems almost sinister in his concision. Nobody who reads "Aphrodite Street" (1987) feels exactly comfortable with the tone, and yet that discomfort makes the poem, alongside works by Thom Gunn and James Merrill, one of the best ever written about AIDS. These are the opening stanzas:

So it's back to window shopping
on Aphrodite Street
for the apples are stacked and juicy
but some are death to eat.

For just one generation
the plateglass turned to air—
when you look for that generation
half of it isn't there.

Surely there are more intimate and heartbroken stances toward one's subject matter (Gunn's great poems in "The Man with Night Sweats" come to mind), and surely the very best poem imaginable would find a way to represent those stances, too. But never has the span between elation and tragedy—between plate glass "turned to air" and the annihilation of half a generation—been depicted with such awful, chiming smoothness.

"Aphrodite Street" was roundly condemned. (In a letter to the *London Review of Books*, the Australian poet Alan Wearne called it kicking a group "when they're down; or worse still, a poet attempting to play God, cheering on the kickers.") Indeed, Murray is often condemned, particularly inside Australia, where his antiliberal views—anathema to a country trying rapidly to shake its old, bad mood—were nearly enshrined in law. In 1998, Murray was commissioned by Prime Minister John Howard to collaborate with him on a new preamble to the Australian constitution. (Howard, the son of a gas-station owner and, like Murray, the descendant of Scottish settlers, seems to have recognized himself in Murray's "Subhuman Redneck" act.) The preamble (presented in a form much watered down from Murray's original draft) was put up for a vote and rejected when people detected, be-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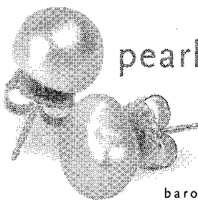
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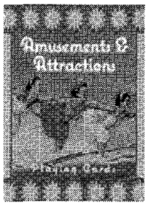
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hind the official redaction, Murray's infamous grumpiness toward immigrants and indigenes. (Murray's positions are by no means simple: fascinated by the possibility that he has Aboriginal ancestry, he has asked about having his blood tested; he has advocated a "Creole" Australia, free of identity politics.) Murray's homemade politics sometimes comes out leftist but, at its heart, carries the claims of the "poor whites," who "must be suppressed, for modernity,/for youth, for speed, for sexual fun."

Reckless, cantankerous, emboldened by a world view based on sexual resentment, Murray is (as he is the first to acknowledge) a cartoon hick in an overplayed idiom. Yet the perversities of his own position (both "redneck" and élite, settler and indigene, "English" poet and Bunyah farmer) make him seem to many of his countrymen all the more authentically "Australian." And Murray's real constitutional work has been to articulate a code true to the "whipcrack country of white cedar/and ruined tennis courts," home to "passionflower and beige-bellied wonga vine." This go-for-broke bush ethos, part Zen and part *sprezzatura*, is what Murray calls "sprawl":

> Sprawl is doing your farming by
> aeroplane, roughly,
> or driving a hitchhiker that extra
> hundred miles home.
> It is the rococo of being your own
> still centre.
> It is never lighting cigars with ten-
> dollar notes:
> that's idiot ostentation and murder
> of starving people.
> Nor can it be bought with the ash of
> million-dollar deeds.

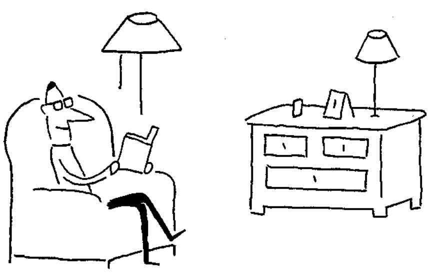
Murray nearly died in 1996 when some object, perhaps a chicken bone, punctured his gut and released deadly bacteria into his body. He spent twenty days in a coma. "Conscious and verbal" once again (that phrase, borrowed from a press release issued by the hospital, became the title of a 1999 poetry collection), Murray redoubled his efforts (as he puts it) to "learn human," banishing "the black dog" of depression that, in his view, had sponsored much of his imaginative work. Murray's new book, "The Biplane Houses" (Farrar, Straus; $23), like everything he has done since the coma, seems to be the work of a person poured back into sentience the way molten copper is poured into a mold. Like the Mars spacecraft that came close enough to the planet to "sniff and scan it/for life's irrefutable scent," Murray's new poetry travels a long distance to get up close to life but spends much of its time airborne, en route.

All of Murray's recent work has been written under the protection of a fictional alter ego, the hero of his verse novel, "Fredy Neptune." (According to Alexander, "Fred" was Murray's wife's code name for his depressive side; only when he reclaimed his genial spirits did she again call him Les.) "Fredy Neptune" has little competition aside from Anne Carson's "Autobiography of Red" for the claim to being the best verse novel of our time. It is the story of a German-Australian sailor in the First World War who, pressed into service by the German Navy, witnesses the death by burning of a group of Armenian women. Fredy then loses all feeling in his body; like Murray, he gets it back only when he realizes that "you have to pray with a whole heart."

If "Fredy Neptune" is about what Murray earlier called "my old theme of lack of communication," "The Biplane Houses" is about trying to communicate across the chasm of moods, persons, and cultures, or, at the very least, about the desire, often thwarted, to do so. This poet of elaborate language and affect-codes opens the new volume, tellingly, by decoding himself:

> The one whose eyes
> do not meet yours
> is alone at heart
> and looks where the dead look
> for an ally in his cause.

As talk of "allies" and "the dead" might suggest, Murray's new work encompasses the psychologically charged discourses of world politics. (Elsewhere in the book, Murray writes a poem in the voice of a suicide bomber: "I implode. And laughter cascades in,/flooding those who suddenly abhor me.") But the first set of eyes we meet, or, in this case, do not meet, when we open the book are the author's. Murray won't look us in the eye, but he will, eyes averted, address us. "Alone at heart," this voice nevertheless seems newly interested in showing, for its readers and for itself, a modicum of empathy.



Always a riddle poet, Murray now likes to give the answers to his ingenious riddles; yet those answers inevitably pose their own riddles, like links in a chain. "Twelve Poems" is such a chain-link riddle poem—among the best such poems to be written, it seems to me, since Stevens's "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird." Following a poem in part about a horse and carriage, "Twelve Poems" opens by correcting the reader's last sense impression:

> That wasn't horses: that was
> rain yawning to life in the night
> on metal roofs.

Even the corrected, "accurate" perception—not horses but rain—carries within it a figural evasion of fact, "yawning." And so the riddle chain begins, linking an "ampersand" ("smugly/phallic . . ./in the deskchair of itself"), a bucket of fish (waving "their helpless fan feet"), a spider (which, like Murray, walks "in circles . . . celebrating/the birthday of logic"). In the last link in the chain, a "simple man" (who, like Murray in the act of writing this poem, is "filling in a form") looks up at his mother and asks, heartbreakingly, "*Mum, what sex are we?*"

Murray has long been a master of depicting Murray-like creatures, greedily eager to introduce themselves as less-than-pleased-to-meet-you. The first-person bestiary of his 1992 sequence "Presence: Translations from the Natural World" forces us to picture Murray now in terms of an ornery cat ("I permit myself to be/neither ignored nor understood"), now in terms of a pig, misty-eyed in recalling his wild days and speaking a pungent idiolect ("Us all fuckers then. And Big, huh? Tusked/the balls-biting dog and gutsed him wet"). The animals in "The Biplane Houses" share some Murray traits, to be sure (an octopus that lives, like a poet, in the "pencilling of dark soil"), but by and large these animals represent impediments and counterclaims that Murray morally cannot but acknowledge. In "The Mare Out on the Road," a horse grows "in moist astonishment" as a car hurtles toward it:

Sliding fast, with the brakes shoaling gravel.
Five metres down, and would the car capsize?
The moment was crammed with just two choices.
One of two accidents would have to happen.

Though the "poor horse" is a "beautiful innocent," the real choice the driver must make is between dying in the ditch and living a life of local infamy ("No court case, just family slurs for life"). Village life—one might as well say "poetry," since this poem feels so adroit in reading its own symbols—involves learning one's right of way. The choice made in the moment—the car veers into the ditch, but nobody is hurt—depends on the speaker's determination to abide by codes other than his own.

Murray has raised a son, Alexander, who has autism, a simple fact that seems to me more central to his work than all the "milk lorries" in Bunyah. Many of his new poems are haunted by the fear of social life, but Murray has learned to diagnose and correct that fear, perhaps for his son's sake. Or for his own. In "The Tune on Your Mind," Murray, mishearing the Latin of Psalm 51 ("*asperges me hyssopo*," "thou sprinklest me with hyssop"), sings, instead, "*Asperger, mais. Asperg is me.*" Characteristically for a poet so committed to self-portraiture, Murray has diagnosed Alexander's symptoms in himself. "The coin took years to drop," he writes:

Lectures instead of chat. The want
of people skills. The need for Rules.
Never towing a line from the Ship of Fools.

The most impressive thing about the new poems is their capacity, writing "with a whole heart," to find the pathos in unlikely subjects. Keats once imagined that a billiard ball gets "a sense of delight" from its own "roundness, smoothness, volubility & the rapidity of its motion," and there is something Keatsian about Murray's ability to locate the precise affect in image after image. "Lateral Dimensions" might have been called "Afterlives," since the poem imagines a series of alternatives, most of them bad, for a poet's posthumous fate. Which of these two sorry creatures would you rather be?:

rodeo bull
he wins every time
then back on the truck

only one car
of your amber necklace
holds a once-living passenger.

The destiny of poets is to be, like the rodeo bull, triumphant over and over at the same rote act (Matthew Arnold is *always a winner* when we read "Dover Beach"!) and, like the insect in amber, a primal speck, once alive, now merely a "passenger" in the history of culture. The alternatives in Murray are not pleasing—but perhaps you would prefer to be like the "newspapers soaked in rain/before they are read"?

Because, like all mature poets, Murray knows and represents his own imaginative limitations, his best poems show empathy lagging a little behind the imagination. The thrill of reading Murray is seeing how the heart that feels will catch up with the eye that sees. ("One might have thought of sight," Stevens writes, "but who could think / Of what it sees, for all the ill it sees?") "Photographing Aspiration" is a boy's motorcycle accident in two takes. Take one:

. . . here's the youth swimming in space
above his whiplash motorcycle:
quadriplegia shows him its propped face—

and here, a moment later, is the same scene with empathy inserted:

after, he begged video scenes
not display his soaking jeans,
urine that leathers would have hidden.

Stanza one is full of emotional redactions, seeing the spectacle entirely from the outside, even going so far as to attribute to it a ghoulish beauty (and projecting pain onto the "whiplash motorcycle" and the "propped face" of always looming "quadriplegia"). That's how the boy of stanza two might like his accident to have been depicted; the old Les Murray, before he looked at his own "propped face" face-to-face, might have been an ally in the boy's cause. A photograph shows a moment in time, the boy "swimming above" his motorcycle; a "video scene" can display the entire arc of the crash, including, to the boy's dismay, the soiling of his jeans; but only a poem (Murray's previous volume was called "Poems the Size of Photographs") can show the begging boy's terror at seeing his fear represented. This new Les Murray, a poet equally of emotional obduracy and heartbreak, has learned what begging sounds like. ♦

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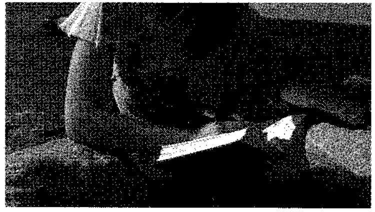

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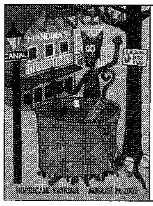

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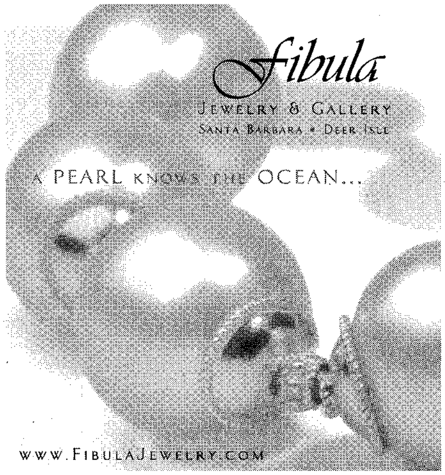

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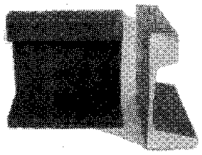

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POP MUSIC

WELL SUITED

Spoon's scrupulous new album.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

The Texas singer-songwriter Britt Daniel has recorded only two songs that are more than five minutes long. He hardly ever plays guitar solos, is a terse interview subject, and would never be photographed wearing an untucked T-shirt. His band, Spoon, which formed in 1994, repeatedly demonstrates the rewards of working within limits and embracing rules. At first, the band aped the work of astringent rock groups like Wire and the Pixies, which wrote songs with gnomic lyrics that were hard to parse and were sung over short, stinging guitar phrases. In July, Spoon will release its sixth album, "Ga Ga Ga Ga Ga"—its best yet. Daniel's lyrics have become more intelligible, and some of his musical references have changed; in places, the album sounds like a Billy Joel or early Motown record, and punk rock, once an audible influence, is largely implicit. But Daniel is still trying to get to the point in a minimum number of moves.

The first great Spoon song, "Waiting for the Kid to Come Out," was released in 1997, when Daniel was twenty-five. The strategies that made it work are central to Spoon's most successful tracks: reduction, precision, and confusion. The song starts with two guitar chords and sticks with them. Daniel plays only the chords' bottom notes and doesn't hit the strings very hard, providing enough notes to make the harmony clear, but no more. He begins the verse in a relaxed, conversational voice that is both clotted and grainy. "This is the electric lounge; no one's afraid to laugh," he mumbles, eliding the first "e" of "electric." "They say, 'C'mon, man, just let me break your back.' " The vowels in "laugh" and "back" are soft and long. (In an interview, Daniel attributed his vocal style to his experience in an elementary-school choir: "The way they taught us to sing was to sing like you're British. Instead of 'ar' you say 'ah.' You don't sing 'car,' you sing 'cahhh.' ") Then the rest of the band—a bass player and a drummer—joins in; the drummer, Jim Eno, plays a two-bar solo that might be called a roll, if the word didn't seem too extravagant for a maneuver consisting of so few hits. (It's as if Eno were merely testing each drum in his kit.) The chorus introduces two new guitar chords, and Daniel shifts from talking to a more open-throated sound, though he doesn't produce much in the way of melody until the end, when he sings the words "Let it bleed," the title of a famous Rolling Stones album. The album has no obvious relevance to the song, which seems to describe a drug deal, except that Spoon shares the Stones' affinity for both skeletal guitar rock and classic soul music.

The parsimony of this aesthetic isn't as frustrating as it sounds: the song is a thrill. Daniel stages the addition of each sound the way Harold Pinter uses pauses to set off lines of dialogue; what eventually unfolds seems meaningful, though you'd be hard pressed to say much about it. Daniel alternates between phrases that don't sound as if they belonged in a song—"in the tradition of your nationalized tracts"—and lyrics that seem so generic they could show up in any song: "This is like being alive." Everyone in the band plays with a restraint that makes the track sound timeless, as though it could have appeared on any rock record of the past forty years.

"Ga Ga Ga Ga Ga" builds on work that began on the band's third album, "Girls Can Tell," which was released in 2001. In simple terms, this is what happened: a piano. In the late nineties, after Spoon had a brief and unhappy association with Elektra (the band's contract was terminated after it released a single album), Daniel started writing songs around rudimentary piano figures and cut back on the guitar playing. The result was minimalist but propulsive music that resembled dance music. (It may account for the popularity of some of the band's recent songs, which have appeared in

Jim Eno, Britt Daniel, Rob Pope, and Eric Harvey, of Spoon, a band that shows the rewards of restraint. Photograph by Cass Bird.

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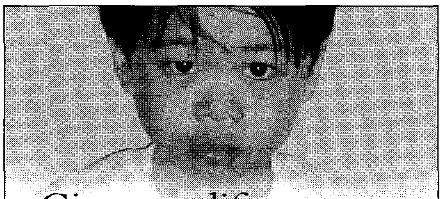

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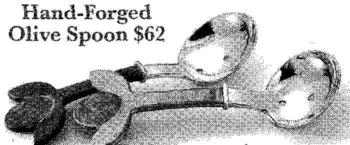

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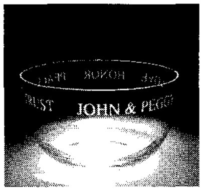

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commercials, on television shows, and in at least one film, "Stranger Than Fiction," for which Daniel also wrote incidental music.)

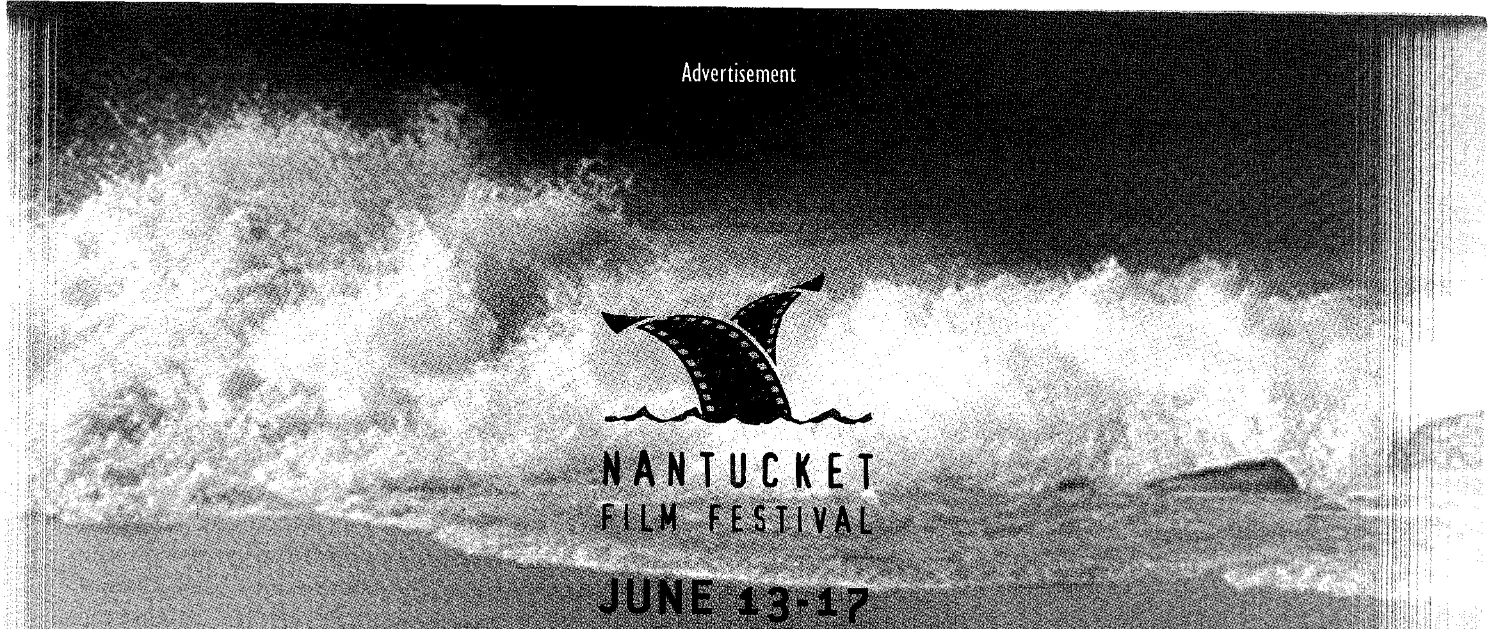
"Ga Ga Ga Ga Ga" is more upbeat than any of the band's previous albums, even when the subject is a breakup. On "You Got Yr Cherry Bomb," which sounds more than a little like the Jam's tribute to Motown soul, "Town Called Malice," Daniel sings in the falsetto voice he used in "I Turn My Camera On," a slight and sexy dance song from 2005 that is the band's best-known number. "Cherry Bomb," one of the album's most emotionally direct songs, begins with a plea—"Life can be so fair, let it go on and on"—and Daniel quickly drops into his normal range to clarify: "We lost it long ago, you and me." His reticence does not prevent him from expressing empathy for his lover: "It was the longest day that I've ever known, I watched you start that drive alone. Blow out that cherry bomb for me, it's gonna burn right up your sleeve."

"The Underdog," which recalls Billy Joel's "Only the Good Die Young," deals with masculinity, a recurring topic in Daniel's work. The first lines are "Picture yourself in a living room, your pipe and slippers set out for you. I know you think that it ain't too far, but I hear a call-of-a-lifetime ring." Later, Daniel sings, "I wanna forget how convention fits, but can I get out from under it, can I cut it out of me?" The music is as inviting and breezy as it might have been gruff and gnarled ten years ago. He strums a hard shuffle on an acoustic guitar, but the sound is nearly buried in the mix, below the bass guitar, some bells, and a perky horn section. The scrupulous arrangement tempers the music's sunny tendencies: the acoustic guitar becomes weirdly loud just before the horns reprise the chorus, and each verse begins with only the sound of a guitar accompanied by a small shaker or a set of spoons clacking. Daniel rarely allows any one instrument to play for the length of a song; each track is like an architect's cutaway model, showing you its beams and supports by eliminating and then reintroducing sounds.

"My Little Japanese Cigarette Case" blends the racket of older Spoon records with Daniel's new sense of song form. Here are the lyrics in their entirety, give or take a word: "It's just my Japanese cigarette case. Bring a mirror to my face. Let all my memories be gone." There is no chorus per se; the song is an eight-bar sequence that repeats eleven times. The first time, Daniel sings the words softly, as if his memories would be gone with the first inhalation of smoke. The next three verses are instrumental: wordless "aahs" and synthesizer swells conveying the impression that the cigarette case makes him feel stylish and lighthearted. In the fifth verse, the piano starts to pound, and Daniel strains as he sings. Then the band pulls back for three verses of humming and a vaguely Spanish guitar solo. When the singing returns, Daniel's voice is even more distressed, but in the next verse he sounds calm. Were the bad memories returning? Or did he just have a hard time finding a light? Daniel favors this kind of emotional ambiguity: in his songs, it could be the end of the world, or merely closing time.

A few weeks ago, Spoon played at the Bowery Ballroom, and Daniel could have found a light easily—or anything else he wanted. He was wearing a black jacket over a black shirt and red slacks, and looked as though he had just come from a shift selling shoes at Florsheim. Tall, blond, and rangy, with big ears and features that recall a younger, thinner Gary Busey, he has been described as a "heartthrob" in the music press. At one point, he traded words with a young woman standing near the stage. "Yeah, I saw you on Spring Street," he said, which seemed to cause temporary paralysis in the woman.

The band sounds even tidier live than it does on recordings. On two songs, you could hear the click of Eno's metronome, setting the tempo. The Spoon catalogue is so consistent in both tempo and mood—there are no true ballads and no out-and-out thrashers—that, after about eight songs, I started to yearn for variation. It never came. Daniel is not about to tell jokes or put on a lampshade, and if this makes the band's performances predictable the effect is balanced by the dignity that comes from self-control. Daniel acknowledged his meticulous nature years ago, toward the end of "Fitted Shirt," a song from "Girls Can Tell": "One day it'll take, and they'll start to make shirts that fit right. Till then, I suppose, I still got dad's clothes, and that's all right." ♦



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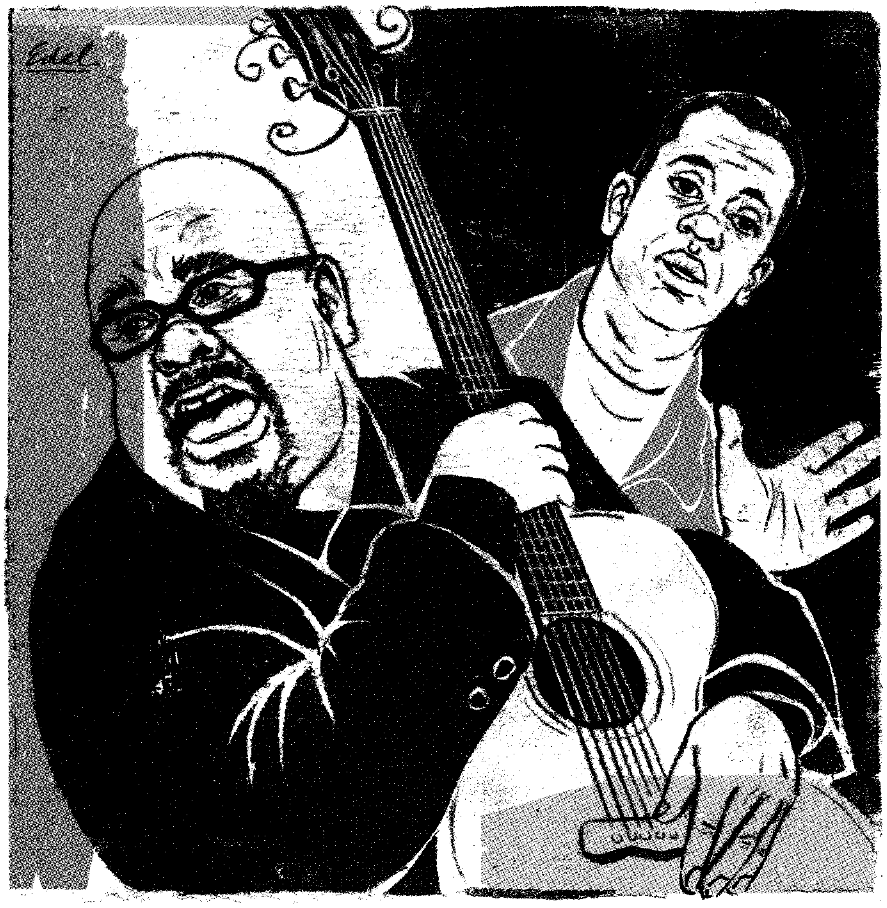
THE THEATRE

YOUNG AMERICAN

Stew on his peripatetic youth.

BY HILTON ALS



Stew and Daniel Breaker as alter egos in "Passing Strange."

Not since Stephen Sondheim introduced a kind of Jewish skepticism and irony to the Broadway musical, in the nineteen-fifties, and Tony Kushner revolved his 2003 show, "Caroline, or Change," around the ways in which class intersects with race have we had such a finely crafted, ethnic-minded American musical as "Passing Strange" (at the Public). "Passing Strange" is a brilliant work about migration—a geographical migration but also its hero's migration beyond the tenets of "blackness" and toward selfhood. Unlike Sondheim and Kushner, the musician and singer Stew, who created "Passing Strange," which is an autobiography of sorts, doesn't distract us with exoticism or nostalgia; his story centers on a young black man who discovers his own Americanness while growing up, first, in Los Angeles and, later, in Europe. The Youth (Daniel Breaker) is a rock-and-roll Candide—a wanderer whose innocence is never entirely corrupted.

At the start of the show, three musicians rise through the stage. They support or provide counterpoint to the guitar-wielding Narrator, the Youth's older alter ego, who is played by Stew. (In addition to writing the show's book and lyrics, Stew co-wrote the propulsive music, with Heidi Rodewald.) After introducing himself ("Now, you don't know me/And I don't know you/So let's cut to the chase/My name is Stew/I'll be narrating this gig so just sit tight"), the Narrator, a short, stocky charmer, with a shaved head, yellow-tinted glasses, and a cotton-candy goatee, wins us over almost at once. Given the rock-and-roll element of the show, we are somewhat jadedly expecting a more colored version of "Rent," with a bit of "Hedwig and the Angry Inch" thrown in. Instead, the Narrator establishes himself as an ironist with a comfortable, middle-class pedigree. In his distinctive, soothing baritone, Stew sings, staring straight out at the audience, "Now, since it's my job I'm gonna set the scene/In a big two-story black middle-class dream/With all the mod cons, the manicured lawns/Some savings bonds, a boy and his mom/Talkin' mid-seventies South Central L.A./A colored paradise where the palm trees sway/But this promised land wasn't delivering the goods/Even in this best of all possible hoods."

The Youth's mother (Eisa Davis) enters. She stands ramrod straight and beautiful, her hair pulled back in a bun. She's imperious but loving as she confronts her son with righteous indignation about his interest in Buddhism. Why won't he go with her to the Lord's house? Slouching in a bright-colored shirt, his eyes as big as those in a Keane painting, the teen-aged Youth will have none of this. Why should he go to church? he asks. (The majority of the show is sung, not spoken.) What do all those black people wailing and shouting for salvation have to do with true spirituality? (In a side-splitting moment, the Narrator points out how the mother slips into "Negro dialect" when admonishing her son about religion—thus sending up the standard American theatrical device of making black performers sound more "real" by substituting "de" for "the.")

The Youth does eventually go with her to church, but he discovers a different god there: rock and roll. He realizes that the gospel music his mother and the other parishioners sing is where Chuck Berry had his roots. Not that the Youth wants to be a rock star—not exactly. He's more interested in an offshoot of rock, punk music, which separates him further from conventional ideas of blackness in the seventies.

Before long, the Youth has assem-

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

bled a ragtag band, the Scaryotypes, that plays punk—badly. Good parodists, Stew and Rodewald exaggerate punk's driving, staccato rhythms and make a tender joke of them. Still, Stew has something less humorous to say about youth in general and this Youth in particular, when he has him sing, in an unmelodic drone:

> 1-2-3-4 1-2-3-4
> I'm at war with Negro mores
> I'm at war with ghetto norms
> My mother stands in doorways beggin' me to conform
> Be a good football-playin' snazzy-dressin' brother
> So the sisters won't be able to tell me from the others—
> Yeah I'm the sole brother—up in this motherfucker. . . .
> So "Roots" blew your mind? You didn't know it was that bad?
> I learned that shit in third grade. In Miss Medearis's class.
> But yer still a buncha slaves. And yer driving me insane,
> Cuz now the whip across your back is connected to your brain.

What the Narrator calls the Youth's "search for the real" begins here. And we marvel at his bravery. He's ill at ease with any stereotype that defines him as anything other than an artist—a free spirit. Still, he doesn't feel that he can mine his freedom in Los Angeles. He wants to find a new life in one of the foreign movies he loves. He wants to decamp for Europe and make the images in his head real.

Stew and the show's exceptionally gifted director, Annie Dorsen, skewer the scene in which the Youth leaves his long-suffering mother by making it look and sound like an Antonioni movie. The mother dons a head scarf and shades; she and the Youth hug poles as they speak in voices that sound as if they'd been dubbed. When the Youth finally leaves, Stew sings, in "Merci Beaucoup, M. Godard," about what the Youth imagines his new life will be like: "Naked girls at breakfast tables / Talking Hegel and Camus . . . / And men dressed up in Gauloise smoke / Quote Marx right back at you." Arriving in Amsterdam, where, naturally, he gets stoned on hash and free love, the Youth learns to exploit the condition in which many black expatriates find themselves: being seen as representatives of their race, speaking for their "people."

Of course, the irony is not lost on us. Didn't the Youth leave America to avoid falling into just this trap? But somehow it's different here, largely because he admires his audience more: they're white and European, not the disapproving members of his mother's church, let alone his mother herself. In Amsterdam, the Youth can develop an unimpeachable shtick; he's a cool black dude, a songwriter who speaks the truth. The voice of the real, however, keeps interrupting his fantasies: his mother calls long-distance to ask when he's coming home. When will he live among his own people again? In his drive to establish his difference, the Youth cannot hear, let alone grasp, what his mother is trying to tell him: We all belong to someone. We may sever the ties for a while, she suggests, but family is the movie that none of us can rewrite or rewind.

Time passes, and the Youth finds himself living among a group of anarchists in Berlin. (The supporting cast takes on multiple roles, and all are exceptional, as are the leading players.) It's Christmas, and the Youth refuses to return home to what he sees as bourgeois safety. The anarchists disappoint him, though, by doing just that; their sentimentality overrules their commitment to destruction. The Youth is forced to face what they are doing, and what he himself has been doing: playing a role that has little, if anything, to do with the truth, avoiding acceptance of the ways in which he is limited by the heart. Returning home, he discovers that the world he knew has changed. Has he? Yes and no. He's still annoyed by his mother's friends' pieties, but he learns to honor his mother, too. In the end, he realizes that she was always his one true attachment.

With "Passing Strange," Stew, Rodewald, and Dorsen have created a work of such singularity that it prompts comparisons less to traditional theatre than to the eccentric iconoclasm of the producer Prince Paul, who, in works like his 1999 hip-hop opera, "A Prince Among Thieves," ushered in the sound of the New Negro. Whether he knows it or not, Stew has picked up the baton. Imagine what he could do if he were to reimagine the work of that other black expat in Europe who gets a nod or two in "Passing Strange": the original "strange" black American, James Baldwin. ♦

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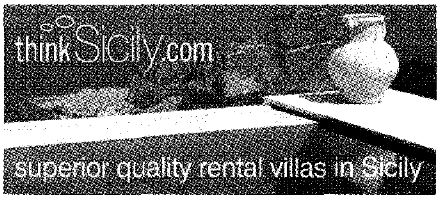
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THE ART WORLD

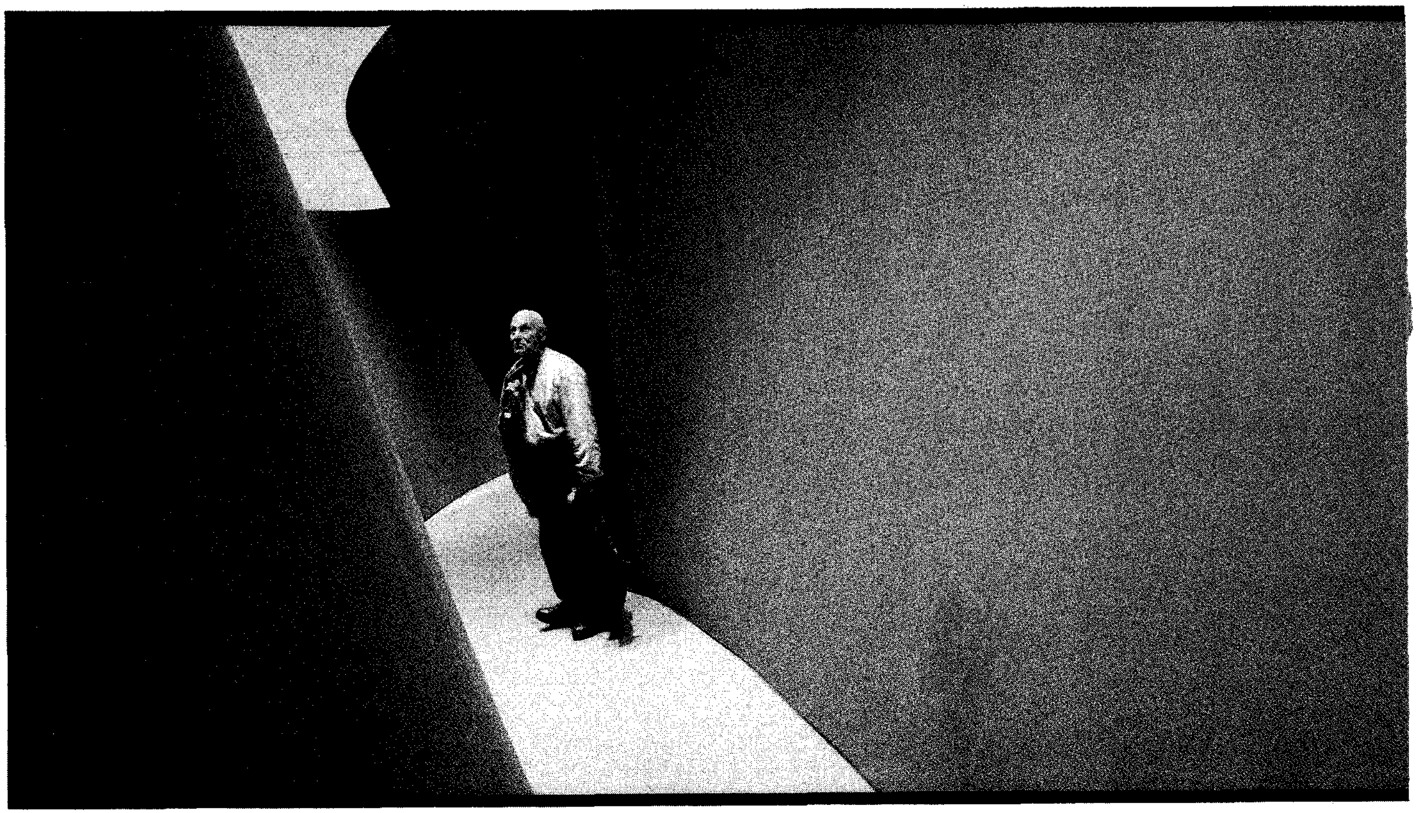
INDUSTRIAL STRENGTH

A Richard Serra retrospective.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

When I think of Richard Serra's work as art, or of art as what Richard Serra does, a bracing bleakness descends, like that of a stern northern region, where people live gladly, while under no illusion that it's the isle of Capri. Serra's mostly magnificent retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art proves that he is not only our greatest sculptor but an artist whose subject is greatness befitting our time. He works at the physical scale of architecture and at the intellectual scale of art history as a whole. The degree of his undoubted success is immeasurable, because nothing really relates to it. The enveloping austerities of Carl Andre and Dan Flavin—Serra's minimalist forebears in the nineteen-sixties, when five years was a generation—come closest, but compared with his work theirs is parlor décor. His art affords no handle as easy, or as ingratiating, as "style." Consciousness of Serra's furious ambition—an arbitrary force, like weather—addles both analysis and aesthetic response. My comprehension of his tons of shaped steel always feels inadequate to their conceptual subtlety, engineering sophistication, and, oh my, size. Taking a childlike view may be the best way to relax with and, to the extent possible, enjoy Serra's art. Don't try to understand. Play.

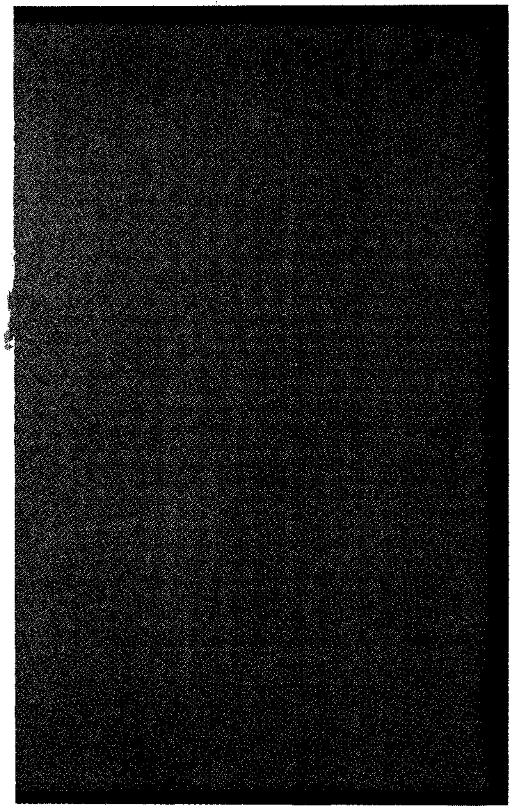
I have in mind not the show's early work, on the sixth floor, which is more congenial to grownup appreciation, but its climactic sections: two colossal pieces in the garden, "Intersection II" (1992-93) and "Torqued Ellipse IV" (1998), and especially a stupendous array of three that were made last year—"Torqued Torus Inversion," "Band," and "Sequence"—in the cavernous second-floor space for contemporary art. All consist of curved walls, twelve or so feet high, of at least two-inch-thick weatherproof steel, which seals itself with soft-textured rust. "Intersection II" is an open, upright sandwich of four almost identical conical sections, tilting this way and that along three routes of passage. The "Torqued Ellipse"s were Serra's breakthrough to subsequent feats of geometric sorcery: oval enclosures, enterable through a slit, whose contour at the top is perpendicular to their contour on the ground. "Torqued Torus Inversion" is a pair of identical enclosures that describe the double curve on the inside edge of a doughnut; side by side, one flares upward and the other down. "Band" is a switchback ribbon that forms four chambers over a space seventy-two feet long. "Sequence," Serra's masterpiece so far, is a maze of two nested S shapes which, when you walk it, goes on just about forever. At each step around or within all the works, the walls curve or slant, or both, differently in relation to each other and to your body. The effect is like materialized music, actuated by your movement. Clap your hands for interesting echoes. You will like seeing and hearing other people share the experience. To explore these



Serra at MOMA with "Sequence" (2006). He works at the physical scale of architecture and at the intellectual scale of art history as a whole.

things alone, as I did, thrills but unnerves. I kept feeling like a trespasser at a top-secret industrial site.

Serra was born in San Francisco in 1939, the son of a shipyard pipe fitter and a remarkably supportive mother. In a chewy interview in the show's catalogue with MOMA's Kynaston McShine (who co-curated the show with Lynne Cooke, of the Dia Art Foundation), Serra tells of his mother's first visit, in the sixties, to his loft on Greenwich Street. "It was barren, there was nothing in it but a mattress on the floor, I was living on maybe $75 a month. . . . She looked out the window at the Hudson River and said, Richard, this is marvelous." He had majored in English literature at the University of California at Santa Barbara—he cites Emerson and Melville as persistent lodestars—and earned bachelor's and master's degrees in art at Yale, where his classmates included Brice Marden and Chuck Close and the abundant role models included Philip Guston and the composer Morton Feldman. (Serra was ousted from a class after surprising a visitor, Robert Rauschenberg, with a work involving a live chicken.) He spent two years, 1964-1966, in Europe, where he met up with the composer Philip Glass. In Paris, they haunted La Coupole at the hour when Giacometti arrived for his after-work drink, and almost every day for a month Serra visited Brancusi's studio museum. In Florence, he immersed himself in Masaccio, Fra Angelico, and Donatello, whom he rates higher as a delineator of sculptural volume than Michelangelo. The beautiful spaces of the Hagia Sophia, in Istanbul, and Le Corbusier's chapel at Ronchamp made lasting impressions on him. For an artist of brute simplicities, Serra is a deeply cultivated student of tradition.



Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

Back in New York, he befriended the rival eminences Donald Judd and Robert Smithson. Jasper Johns encouraged him. He was strongly affected by avant-garde choreographers, especially Yvonne Rainer. His first substantial work employed cast-off strips and sheets of rubber, manipulated to sculptural effect—his contribution to the big bang of post-minimalism, with an emphasis on "process" which was shared by such peers as Bruce Nauman and Eva Hesse. Glass assisted him on the pioneering "Cutting Device: Base Plate Measure" (1969), a long irregular stack of lead, wood, stone, and steel elements, with two neat parallel cuts and severed extremities dragged aside at odd angles. It is a visceral demonstration of mind over matter. Serra had won art-world fame a year earlier, at a warehouse outpost of the Leo Castelli Gallery, by slinging molten lead into the angle of a wall and a floor. The adjective "macho" became attached to him like a tattoo.

Serra's signal works of the late sixties are "props": cumbrous rolls and slabs of lead held together only by gravity, either against walls or interbalanced on the floor. As alarming impingements on the viewer's space, defining art as the peremptory assertion of the artist's prerogative, they deliberately stirred dread, though they were quite secure. They aren't frightening at MOMA, though, because they have been placed in wood-and-Plexiglas corrals—a precaution that reduces them to framed representations of themselves. The effect is bizarre. The zoo-like barriers generate as much sculptural presence—and meaning, as symbols of submission to institutional policy—as the saturnine pieces. Granted, Serra dropped scaring people from his repertoire in the seventies. Interim works like the terrific "Circuit II" (1972-86), four upright steel plates converging from the corners of a room, and "Delineator" (1974-75), a plate embedded in the ceiling at a right angle to another on the floor, achieve frissons of overawing materiality without appearing dangerous; and his subsequent walls, though they loom, are obviously self-supporting. But the props, deprived of their confrontational menace, become trivial. Serra's acceptance of the barriers suggests that being museumified matters more to him than does fidelity to his original intentions or to a fundamental tenet of minimalism: the rejection of frames, pedestals, and other protocols for treating art works as precious objects.

The impact of Serra's recent work is very twenty-first-century, in keeping with the physical and social immensities of globalized civilization. Its more recondite forms are made possible by CATIA, a computer program for designing in three dimensions, which is a mainstay, too, of Serra's friend Frank Gehry, whose swooped and petalled architecture has striking affinities with the artist's sculpture. (To experience Serras in the Bilbao Guggenheim is to know how wonderful our present age can be.) At the same time, the work is poignant with reminiscences of the two centuries past. As an affair of big, rusty things without practical use, it evokes derelict ships, locomotives, and heavy-industrial factories. It also recalls times when miracles of human invention were still spectacular, like the Brooklyn Bridge, rather than spectral, like the Internet. More generally, Serra conserves a battered modernist confidence in the collective genius of experts, a priestly class that confers meaning and direction on society. Hardheaded secular culture can make no greater claim to spiritual efficacy than it does in this show, appropriately housed in the high church of the twentieth century that is MOMA. The measure is the childlike feeling which the work rewards, a sense that the world's order and progress are being seen to by sensationally competent adults. Ever fewer of us countenance that faith today, but it retains power even in decline. Among the echoes in Serra's steel canyons is that of something Matthew Arnold perceived at Dover Beach, a "long, withdrawing roar." ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

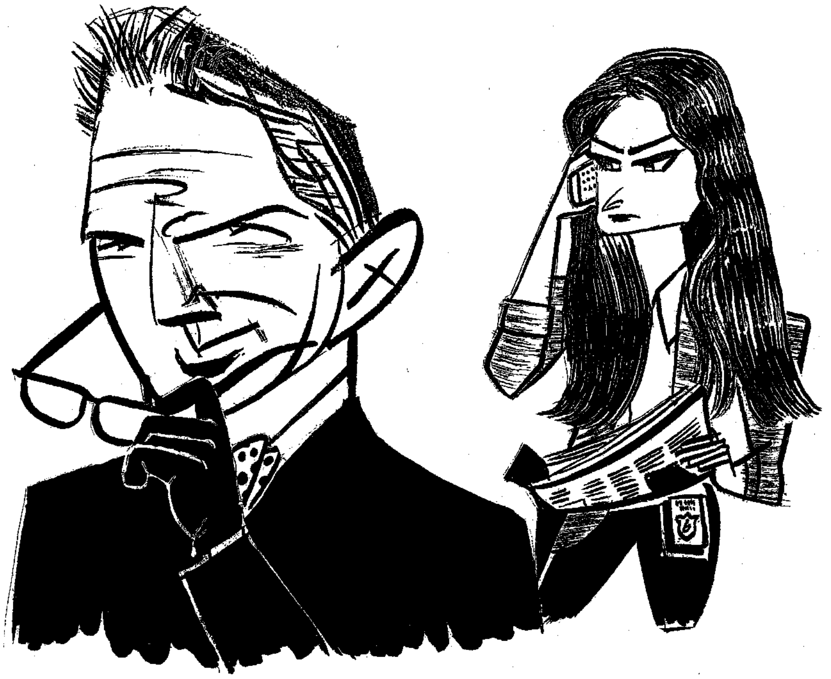
BAD BEHAVIOR

"Mr. Brooks," "Crazy Love," "Ocean's Thirteen."

BY DAVID DENBY

Alfred Hitchcock used to complain about moviegoers who refused to yield to the pleasures of narrative. "The plausibles," he called them—viewers who, rather than enjoying one of his stories about two ordinary people caught up in some sort of sinister affair, would nag at minor details or ask, "Why don't they call the cops?" To narrative filmmakers, the plausibles ask the wrong questions and make the wrong demands. They should care not whether a thriller is absolutely consistent but whether it gives good, nasty jolts. "Mr. Brooks," a new thriller starring Kevin Costner, is a challenge to the literal-minded. A local celebrity in Portland, Oregon, a self-made millionaire with a loving wife and daughter, Earl Brooks has a secret life: he is addicted to murder. Every now and then, over a period of several years, with excruciating guilt as well as considerable enjoyment, he has gone out at night and committed a perfect crime. He has a superb enabler—an alter ego (William Hurt) whom he calls, for some reason, Marshall, and who accompanies him everywhere. No one else, of course, can see Marshall, and when Brooks converses with him people think that he is merely lost in thought. Marshall is Brooks's desire, his madness, and his sanity, too—the part of him that wants to kill people and also calculates how to avoid getting caught. Think of him as ego and superego rolled into one hyperarticulate pest. The movie, which was written by Bruce A. Evans and Raynold Gideon and directed by Evans, is so well made, and so compelling as a portrait of a man at war with himself, that, right up until the end, many people will probably be entertained by its intricately preposterous story. Perhaps the most surprising element is that the onscreen alter ego—normally a tiresome device—turns out to be a big part of the fun.

Kevin Costner, who is famously talented at playing athletes but often stiff, even monotonous and smug, when playing other roles, gives his best performance in years. As Brooks, he is formidable and distant at work, relaxed and authoritative at home, and sardonic and almost viciously funny on his late-night jaunts. Costner seems to be exploring aspects of himself that he's never put on the screen before. His Mr. Brooks is a smart guy who's good at reading situations and figuring out what other people want—a businessman's skills, which the movie, in a mildly subversive turn, suggests might also make for a good murderer. Costner was obviously attracted to the expansive possibilities in the script; after reading it, he agreed to co-produce the movie. And he also loosened up, I would guess, because he got to play opposite William Hurt, now the most brilliant character actor in American movies. Marshall, pleading with his host to commit murder, is a roguish wit, seductive and amused, who knows that he's being unreasonable but presses his needs anyway. Once satisfied, he becomes the ultimate kibbitzer—he doesn't have to do anything but give advice and render judgment on Brooks's criminal panache. Hurt, tucking in his jaw and alternating irony, sarcasm, and mockery, hits one spinning serve after another, and Costner hits them right back at him. The two have a fine time, as if they had been doing this routine for years.



Kevin Costner and Demi Moore in a surprising new thriller.

TOM BACHTELL

Brooks has a peculiar adversary—a voyeur with satanic eyebrows (the comic Dane Cook), who photographed him killing a naked young couple. He blackmails Brooks, but he doesn't want money. He wants to be taken along on Brooks's next night out; he's an aspiring murder junkie. Brooks has an even more formidable foe—a tough homicide detective named Tracy Atwood, played by Demi Moore in full battle mode as a woman fighting not only crime but a parasitical husband. Speaking of her character, Moore has said, "The rage Atwood has is something that I personally don't like," which is odd, since, in so many of her movies, rage is the main thing she has going for her. Moore is easier to watch when her roles (including Atwood) allow her to use explicitly what some people find intolerable about her—her desire to overdefine any given situation so that she can control it. The screenplay adds a third wild card, Brooks's beloved college-age daughter (Danielle Panabaker), who may have murderous tendencies of her own. Twenty years ago, Evans and Gideon wrote the coming-of-age drama "Stand by Me." Like Earl Brooks, they clearly have a talent for the dark side, and this movie, though it goes wrong at the end, suggests that Evans, as a director, should give in to it. The rhythm of the picture switches between long silent sequences, in which Brooks falls into a state of murderous abstraction, and the elegant notation of physical movement—a hand entering a frame, photographs burning in a kiln. Evans will never be Hitchcock, but he produces enough pleasurable tension to send the plausibles into a frenzy of disapproval.

In 1959, about the same time that Doris Day successfully defended her honor from Rock Hudson's assault in "Pillow Talk," an extremely pretty Bronx girl named Linda Riss fought off a married lawyer named Burt Pugach. He was thirty-two, Linda ten years younger. Pugach wasn't much to look at, and his honesty, both personal and professional, was intermittent at best, but he had some money. He took Linda to "a cabaret in New Rochelle," and flew her around in his Piper Cub. Trying to account for Burt's appeal, Linda's friends, in recent interviews, cite his exalted status in the lower-middle-class Bronx. He had a Cadillac! He had a *plane!* At first, Burt pursued Linda without telling her that he was married; he then produced a set of divorce papers, a forgery exposed by Linda's mother. Through all this, Linda, resolving, like Doris Day, not to "give it away," held out for a marriage proposal. Despite many further endearments from Burt, she agreed to marry a good-looking young man named Larry Schwartz, whereupon Burt hired three thugs to throw lye in her face so that the young man would no longer want her. This barbaric act, which left Linda nearly sightless, wound up tying her and Burt together for life.

The fascinating documentary "Crazy Love," directed by the filmmaker and public-relations executive Dan Klores, is a real-world story, as redolent of the time and place as Dion and the Belmonts, in which possessiveness, stupidity, loyalty, and need are joined together in bewildering combinations. It's as if some disreputable and unending liaison out of Greek mythology had arisen on the streets of the East Bronx to be celebrated not with poetry but with front-page headlines. Like "Capturing the Friedmans," Klores's movie uses media archeology to reveal the layers of untoward behavior beneath the responsible surface of American Jewish life. Klores incorporates still photographs, home movies, and stock footage, feeding them into extensive current-day interviews with the two principals, their friends, and a local philosopher, Jimmy Breslin, who says, "Nobody is as visibly insane as Burt Pugach and still not institutionalized." But Breslin's judgment is not quite right. Klores and his editor, David Zieff, hold a few surprises in reserve, one of which is that Burt is occasionally something more than a demented lowlife. Linda, now seventy, with a large pile of hair and dark glasses, seems a tough and practical woman; Burt, eighty, with a Mephistophelian goatee, comes off not as pathological but as exceptionally egotistical, wily, larcenous, and guilty. His love for Linda redeems him, and he knows it. One may be horrified by these two, or laugh at them, but both horror and laughter give way to amazement at the human talent for survival.

You can build a ship—maybe a whole fleet—in a bottle, but then what do you do with it? For Steven Soderbergh's "Ocean's Thirteen," an enormous Las Vegas casino—the centerpiece of a new mega-hotel, The Bank, named after its egomaniacal owner, Willy Bank (Al Pacino)—was constructed on a Hollywood soundstage. This movie is certainly more hardworking than "Ocean's Twelve," in which Danny, Rusty, and the boys, lounging at George Clooney's villa on Lake Como, barely condescended to speak their lines between drinks. The script, by Brian Koppelman and David Levien, is a revenge plot: Bank has swindled the gang's beloved mentor, Reuben (Elliott Gould), so Danny and the others plan to louse up the opening of Bank's hotel. Soderbergh assembles the elements of their complicated scheme—which involves magnetizing dice and creating an earthquake—into short, punchy scenes and edits them together at top speed. But, after a lot of buildup, not much happens at the climax. The casino set hardly gets explored. Soderbergh ends the movie with a few jokes, which is casual and neat but leaves you wondering whether the practice of making enormous movies about nothing isn't a little mad. ♦

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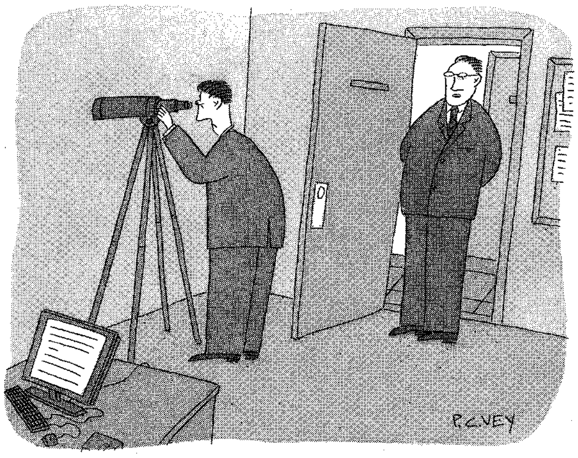
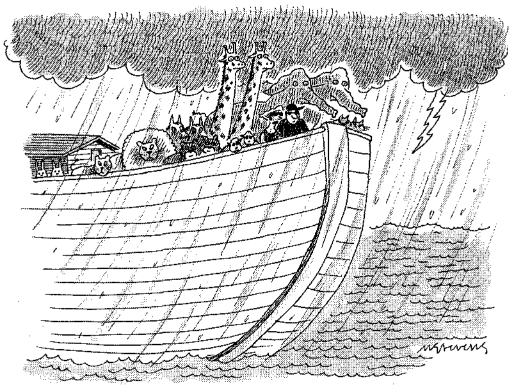
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Danny Shanahan, must be received by Sunday, June 17th. Finalists in the May 28th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the July 2nd issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"When you're finished here, Spencer, we'll need you on the bridge-to-nowhere project."
Richard Hine, New York City



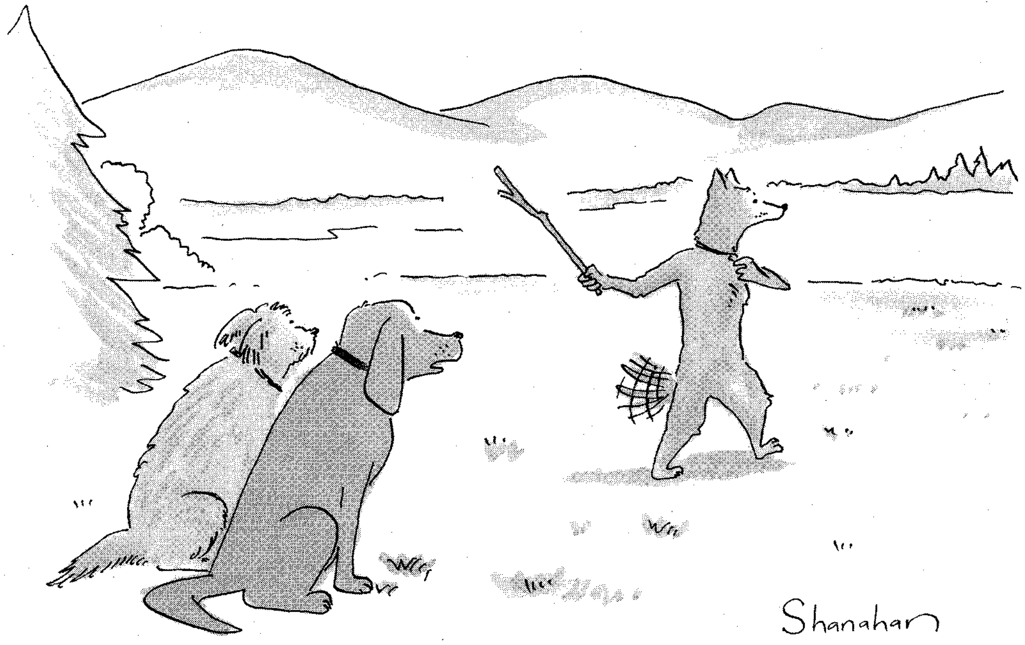
THE FINALISTS

"Don't tell Noah about the vasectomy."
David Kempler, Island Park, N.Y.

"I told you it was a couples cruise."
Mary Albon, Arlington, Mass.

"I think we should see other people."
Carl Hammarskjold, San Francisco, Calif.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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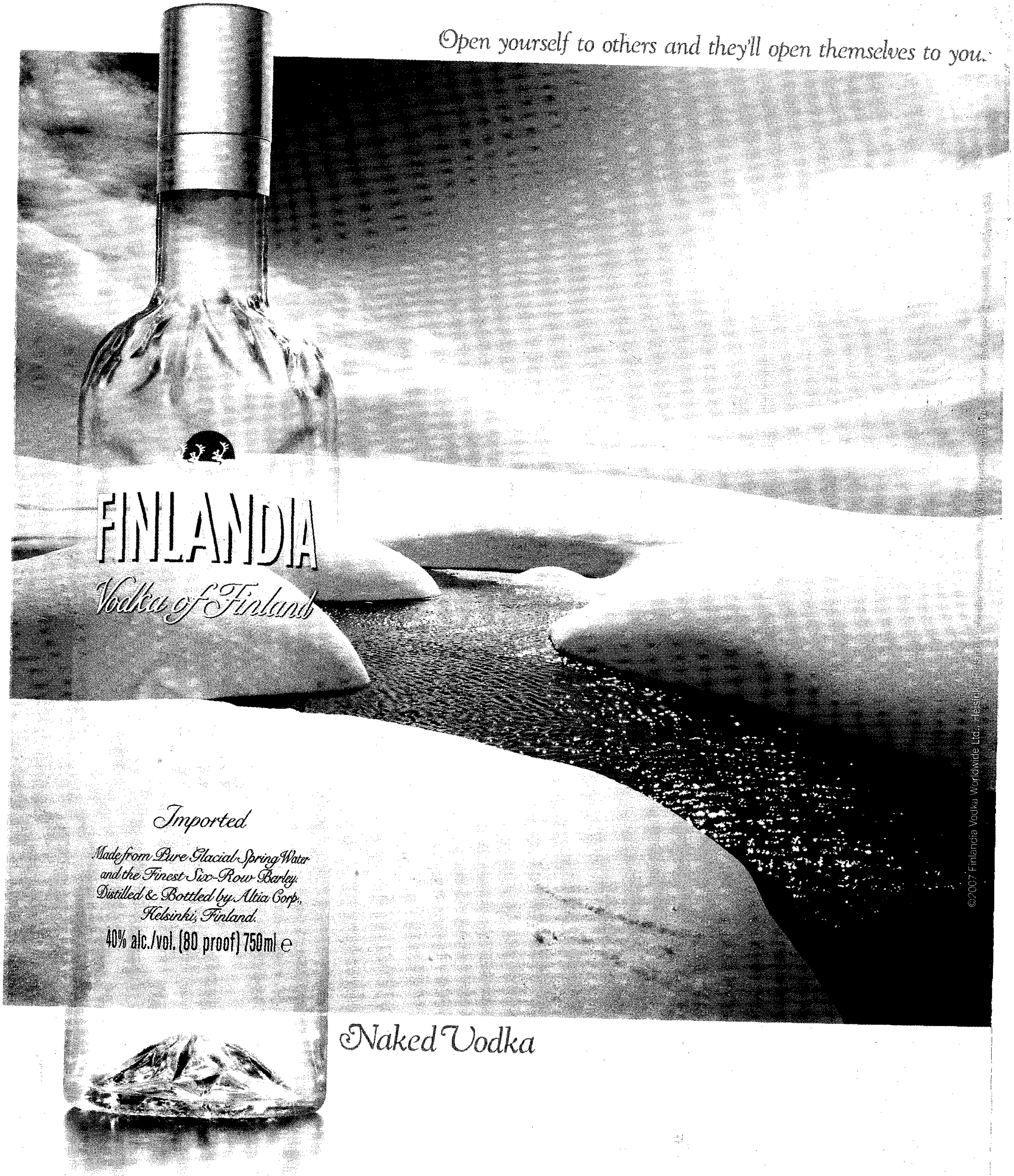
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